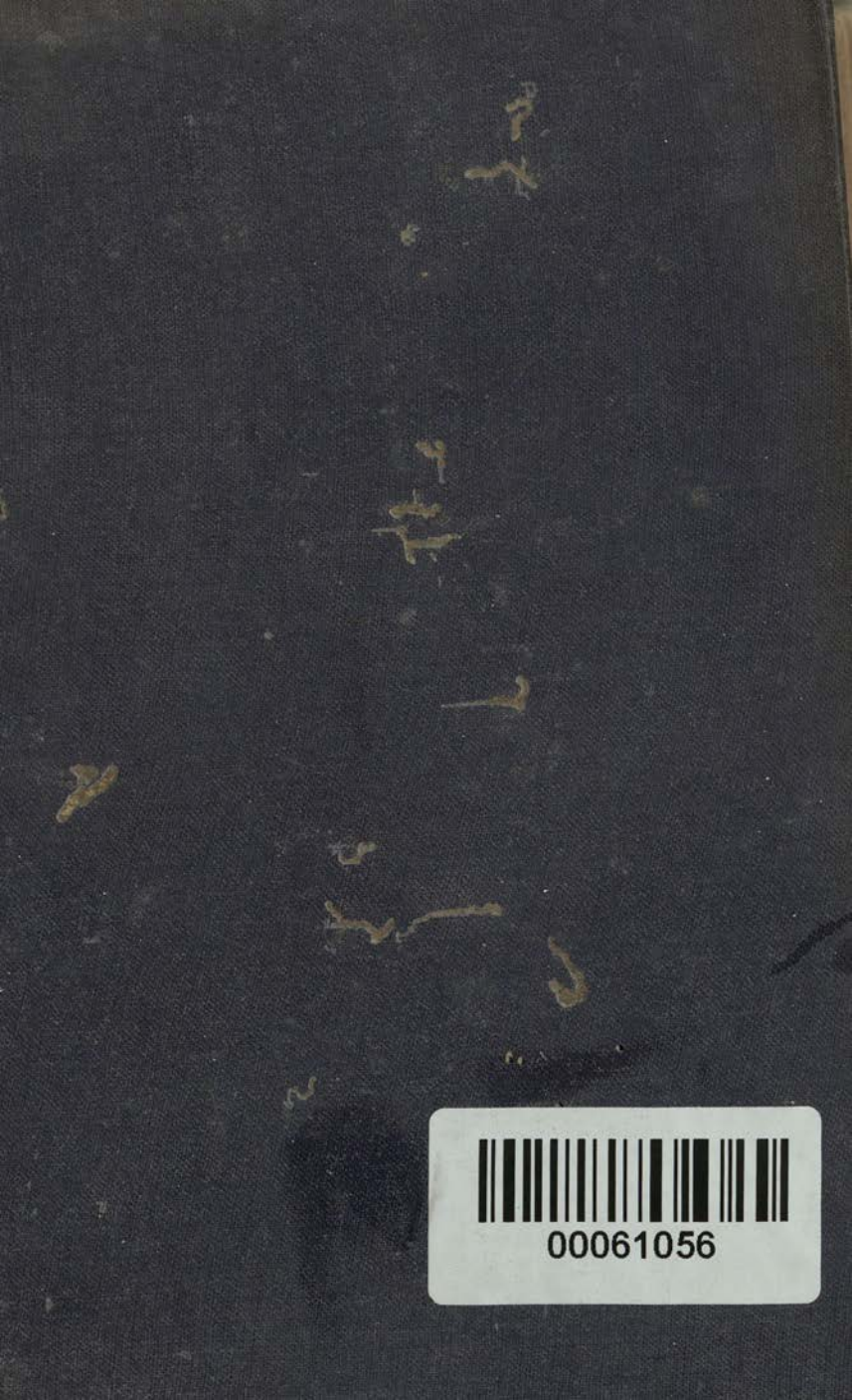
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# THE TRAGEDIES

OF

# VITTORIO ALFIERI:

COMPLETE,

INCLUDING HIS POSTHUMOUS WORKS.

*TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.*

61056
ac.

EDITED BY

EDGAR ALFRED BOWRING, C.B.

*IN TWO VOLUMES.*

VOL. I.

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1876.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

TO THE

# PEOPLE OF FREE AND UNITED ITALY,

This Translation

OF THE

WORKS OF HER GREATEST TRAGIC POET,

WHOSE WRITINGS DID SO MUCH TO BRING ABOUT THAT INDEPENDENCE
WHICH SHE AT LENGTH ACHIEVED SIXTY YEARS
AFTER HIS DEATH,

IS INSCRIBED.

# PREFACE.

THE present is the first occasion on which the Tragedies of the great Italian poet Alfieri have been submitted to the English public in a complete shape. So far back as 1815, Mr. Charles Lloyd published a translation of the nineteen tragedies which Alfieri had printed in his lifetime, and I am not aware of the existence of any other English version. It is this work of Mr. Lloyd which forms the basis of the present edition. The critical knowledge of the Italian language possessed by that gentleman, as shown by the result of his labors, extending over some 30,000 verses, is very remarkable. He has also shown that he possesses the poetic faculty in a high degree, and it has been a satisfaction to me to have had so sound a basis to work upon. On proceeding, however, to compare Mr. Lloyd's translation minutely with the original, I was immediately struck by the fact that in the latter there are only some 26,500 verses as compared with Mr. Lloyd's above-mentioned number of 30,000. Nor was the cause of this far to seek; for in his preface Mr. Lloyd explicitly states that "he has endeavored merely, as far as he could, to catch perspicuously the general meaning of Alfieri, without at all binding himself down to a literal word-for-word translation, or to a close imitation of his style." And he proceeds to state that "the style of Alfieri is so laconic and so austere, abounds so little in images, similes, or any ornamental redundancies, that he doubts how far a translation in blank verse in our language, closely imitating the original, would have been acceptable to the English reader." He also draws a comparison, which is

of course true enough, between the softness and clearness of the Italian and the greater harshness of the English language.

I venture, however, to differ from Mr. Lloyd in his opinion as to the manner in which a great writer like Alfieri should be treated, in any attempt to introduce him to the English reader. In my own previous translations of the poems of the great German writers Goethe, Schiller, and Heine,[1] I have not only uniformly adopted a different principle, and given as literal and even line-for-line translation of the original as appeared consistent with good and easy-flowing English, but have also in those different works offered my reasons (which I will not now repeat) for thinking that fidelity to the original is the translator's first duty. On these grounds, without discarding Mr. Lloyd's clever version, I have felt it right to institute a most minute comparison between it and the original, not only line by line, but even in respect of the comparatively small matter of punctuation—a point which Alfieri himself attended to with the most extraordinary care, but in which Mr. Lloyd by no means followed him. In both these respects I have done my best to restore the present English edition to as nearly as possible the state in which the last Italian edition was left by Alfieri himself, and have at any rate considerably reduced the number of verses given by Mr. Lloyd. Various other alterations have also been made, rendered necessary partly by mistranslations or misconceptions of the original, which is by no means wonderful in the case of an author the especial characteristic of whose style is brevity and austerity, and partly by changes in the accents of English words which have taken place in the sixty years since Mr. Lloyd's book was published, and which are by no means few.[2]

Another reason why I have made these alterations in Mr. Lloyd's work is the necessity of uniformity throughout the whole translation now offered to the public, and which for the first time contains the whole of Alfieri's

[1] All of these have been republished in *Bohn's Standard Library*.

[2] An instance of this is the word *successor*, in which Mr. Lloyd (like one great living English statesman) lays the whole accent on the first syllable.

posthumous tragedies, viz. *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Abel*, and *Alcestis II.* For these last translations I am exclusively responsible, and must take upon myself the entire merit or blame, whichever may be the verdict pronounced by the reader respecting them. I have closely followed the above-mentioned rule in dealing with them, and, whatever may be the defects of my version, it is at any rate a line-for-line reproduction of the original, as respects all the blank verse; and I have also endeavored to follow most closely the metre of the original in those portions which are in rhyme, although this has been no easy task in the case of some of the choruses in *Abel*, and still more in the grand classical choruses in *Alcestis II.*

With the view of facilitating reference to the work, I have prefixed to each of the twenty-two tragedies a brief summary of the argument, as is done in the case of 'Paradise Lost,' 'Paradise Regained,' 'Chapman's *Homer*,' and other great works.[1] I have also added in each case such extracts from the criticisms on the play, either by Alfieri himself or by others, and such other information respecting it, as seemed likely to be of interest to the reader, without unduly trespassing upon him.

A few general remarks respecting the character of the works of Alfieri now submitted for public criticism may not be uninteresting. The famous Sismondi, himself a Swiss by birth, who has criticised these works at great length in his *Literature of the South of Europe*, says, with great truth, that "Alfieri is the most close and concise of poets, and never admits an inefficient line." All writers agree that the distinguishing character of Alfieri is conciseness and brevity, even in some cases to the verge of harshness. Schlegel, who was no great admirer of his, draws a comparison between him and Metastasio, in which he admits the greater power of Alfieri's writings. "He was highly indignant at the lax immorality of his countrymen, and the degeneracy of his contemporaries in general. This indignation stimulated him to the exhibition of a

[1] These Arguments may take the place of some similar ones (which I have never seen) written by a certain Abate Carlo Mengoni, and first added in the edition of 1814 and some subsequent ones, but omitted in the best.

manly strength of mind, of stoical principles and free opinions, and on the other hand led him to depict the horrors and enormities of despotism . . . I might not unaptly call him a Metastasio reversed. If the muse of the latter be a love-sick nymph, Alfieri's muse is an Amazon." Sismondi considers the publication of Alfieri's first four tragedies as perhaps the greatest epoch in the literary history of Italy during the eighteenth century, the nation up to that period having been contented with languid love-plots and effeminate dramas; when the sudden appearance (in 1783) of Alfieri's plays, so novel, elevated, and austere in their composition, led to an enquiry into the essence of the dramatic art. "Alfieri attempted to throw off the disgraceful yoke under which in Italy the human intellect labored, and every high-minded Italian, who lamented over the humiliation of his country, was united to him by the bonds of mutual sympathy. Thus was the taste for the noblest species of tragedy mingled with the love of glory and of liberty. The theatre, which had been so long considered the school of intrigue, of languor, of effeminacy, and of servility, was now regarded by the first Italians as the only nurse of mental vigor, of honor, and of public virtue. Their critics at last dared, with noble pride, to turn their eyes to the dramatic writers of other nations, whose superiority had long been a humiliating reflection. Though divided in opinion upon the laws and the essence of the drama, they all united in applauding the elevation, the nobleness, and the energy of Alfieri's sentiments; and opinions which, till that time, had been banished from Italy, burst forth at once, like the long-suppressed voice of public feeling."

Mons. Ginguené, in writing his biographical notice of Alfieri for the *Biographie Universelle*, has shown a very just appreciation of his qualities and literary merits. He says that Alfieri's literary reputation was only established with difficulty. "Faults were found in his style, which were afterwards regarded as good qualities. He did not write like all the world, and was blamed for it; but all the world, or at any rate all tragic poets, ended by wishing to write like him. The dramatic system which he introduced into Italy is, whatever he may have said of it, that of

France. He only attempted to correct its length and languidness . . . He rarely speaks to the heart; but he is eloquent and nervous in the great passions; he possesses grandeur, and always aspires to the sublime in both his ideas and his style. His characters have energy, sometimes at the expense of historical and even dramatic truth. Not appealing at all to the eyes and little to the heart, he produces little effect on the stage, but much on the reader. His dialogue is often a model of precision, of justice, and of dramatic argumentation. The form of his verse is skilful and harmonious; but his style, always firm, is sometimes a little harsh." Madame de Staël also, in her *Corinne* (book vii. c. 2), speaks in the highest terms of Alfieri.

The extreme simplicity of all Alfieri's tragedies is remarkable. The "three dramatic unities" are hardly ever departed from by him; he offers no *coups de théâtre;* there is no by-play; all confidants, male and female, previously considered essential, are abolished by him, and he presents very few subordinate characters. Ornamental versification is discarded; but the vigor and terseness of the language, and the concentration of passion in the few *dramatis personae* retained by him, are such that it is stated (in opposition to the view just quoted) that the performance of a play of Alfieri always keeps an Italian audience as it were spell-bound.

Judging by the portraits which accompany the different editions of Alfieri's works, he must have been an eminently handsome man. He is described as having been of a lofty and noble figure; of a distinguished but little-imposing expression, although his air was habitually disdainful and proud; his forehead was large and open; his hair thick and well-placed, though red; whilst his legs were long and thin.

The present Preface may perhaps be appropriately closed by a short summary of the principal events of Alfieri's life, condensed from an article written by me in *Fraser's Magazine* for March 1851, and which was itself compiled from Alfieri's own most interesting and entertaining Autobiography, to which it is to be hoped the English reader may some day be introduced.

Count Vittorio Alfieri was born at Asti in Piedmont on the 17th January, 1749, the year of the birth of Goethe. His father died before he was a year old, and his mother soon married again a member of the family, and an uncle became his guardian. A certain priest taught him from the age of six to nine, but was himself an ignoramus, and Alfieri thinks that if he had remained much longer with him he should have become an irreclaimable dunce. His relatives moreover had the opinion, then common amongst the Italian nobility, that "a gentleman need not be a doctor." Even at that early age, he was attacked by that melancholy which formed a prominent feature in his character through life, and when he was seven he tried to poison himself. Any propensity towards telling untruths which he might have had, was cured by his being sent to church in a nightcap. He was placed when nine years old in the Turin Academy, but the education given there was most defective, and the scholars were not even taught Italian grammar. He speaks of himself as "a donkey, in the midst of donkeys and under a donkey." His health moreover was extremely delicate at this time, and he suffered from a succession of singular diseases. In character he was passionate and obstinate. He gradually advanced to the classes of humanity and rhetoric, and in 1761, when twelve years old, joined the class of philosophy in the University of Turin. His first knowledge of Italian poetry was derived from the purchase during the previous year from a schoolfellow of a copy of Ariosto in four volumes, for which he paid half a fowl a week for four weeks; but his master confiscated the book as soon as he found out that he had it. He gives an amusing account of the wretched instruction then imparted in the University. About this time he paid his first visit to the opera, and the music produced an extraordinary effect upon him. His first sonnet was then written, but was turned into ridicule by his relations. He gradually advanced to the study of physics under the celebrated Beccaria, and civil and canon law, and took lessons on the piano and in geography, fencing and dancing. He imbibed an invincible dislike to the latter, which he attributed to the grimaces and contortions of the master, a Frenchman from Paris.

He dates from this period his extraordinary hatred through life of the French nation.

When he was fourteen his uncle and guardian died, and he also became by the laws of Turin his own master, so far as to be able to spend his income, under the supervision of a mere curator. His own and his uncle's fortunes together made him a rich person. Just now he passed his examination in logic, physics and geometry, and obtained his degree of Master of Arts. He took to riding, an exercise of which he was always passionately fond, and this rapidly restored his health. He now began to lead a very idle and dissipated life, though he was still under the control of the University authorities, and behaved so badly that they had to place him under arrest, and he was confined for some months to his own apartment, refusing to make any apology and leading the life of a wild beast, never putting on his clothes and spending most of his time in sleep. His sister's marriage at length procured his release, and he took to buying horses, and soon had a stud of eight, being then of the mature age of fifteen. Two years later he was appointed ensign in the provincial regiment of Asti, which only met twice a year for a few days. Soon afterwards he obtained from the king, though with difficulty, leave to travel with an English Catholic tutor, and here ends what he calls the era of adolescence, whilst that of youth commences, "comprising ten years of travel and dissipation." After journeying over Italy with his tutor, he got leave to travel with no one but his own attendant, and went to France, but took an extreme dislike to the country and especially to Paris, which he called "a filthy sewer." He was presented to Louis XV., and much annoyed by the superciliousness of the monarch, who stared at him as if he were Jupiter and Alfieri an ant. He was as much delighted with England, which he next visited, as he was disgusted with France, and wished he could remain there for ever. He went to Holland in June 1768, and had his first love adventure there. When the lady left the Hague he tried to commit suicide, and on recovering his spirits returned to Italy, when a real desire to study first took possession of him, his especially favorite book being Plutarch's *Lives*, which he used to read in

transports of excitement, shouting, crying, and fury. He soon recommenced his travels and went first to Vienna, where he declined to be introduced to Metastasio, because he had seen him make a servile bow to the Empress Maria Theresa. In Prussia he was very indignant at the military despotism of Frederick the Great, and would not appear in uniform when presented to him. Next he went to Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, where he refused the honor of presentation to the "philosophical Clytemnestra," Catherine II. Once more he returned to England, and in 1771 became involved in an intrigue with Lady L——, wife of a well-known peer and officer, which made an extraordinary sensation in English society at the time, and led to her divorce and to his fighting a duel with her husband in the Green Park. After visiting Spain and Portugal, he, having made the complete tour of Europe in three years, commenced his residence in Turin, in May 1772. For nearly two years after his return to Italy, he was in love with a great lady, older than himself, and whose reputation did not stand very high; and while under her influence obtained leave to resign his commission in the army. It was during this time that he wrote the first sketch of a *Cleopatra*, respecting which some further information will be found further on in the notes prefixed to his posthumous tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Soon afterwards he set to work in real earnest, and made his servant fasten him to his chair, that he might not go out. His first production was another and improved *Cleopatra*, which was produced in June 1775, at the Carignan Theatre. A small comic piece, called *The Poets*, written by him, was also performed at the same time. It was in ridicule of the *Cleopatra*, and both were much applauded. At this point, he ends the epoch of youth and begins that of manhood, "embracing more than thirty years of composition, translations, and miscellaneous studies."

*Philip* and *Polynices*, both originally written in French prose, were next turned by him into Italian poetry, and he carefully studied Tasso, Ariosto, Dante, and Petrarch. He describes his qualifications for his new career of literary activity to have been a resolute, indomitable, and extremely obstinate mind, and a heart full to overflowing

with every species of emotion, particularly love, with all its furies, and a profound and ferocious hatred of tyranny. To this was added a faint recollection of various French tragedies. On the other hand, he was almost entirely ignorant of the rules of tragic art, and understood his own language most imperfectly. "The whole was enveloped in a thick covering of an incredible presumption, or rather petulance, and a violence of character so great as only with difficulty to allow me to know, investigate, and listen to the truth. The reader will see that these qualifications are better adapted for forming a bad and vulgar prince than a luminous author."

Alfieri, after studying Latin with the help of a tutor, presently went to Tuscany, first to Siena and then to Florence, in order to acquire the best Italian idiom. At the latter place an event happened, in October 1777, which decided his future life. He made the acquaintance of the Countess of Albany, wife of Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender. She was then twenty-five years old, and had been married five years. She was the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, Prince of Stolberg-Gedern. She is described as having been "of the middle height, blonde, with deep blue eyes, a nose slightly turned up, the complexion dazzlingly fair, like that of an Englishwoman. Her expression was maliciously gay, but not without a dash of raillery; her nature more French than German. She seemed made to turn everybody's head." Her husband was of a violent and ungovernable temper, and treated her very cruelly. His character is thus described by Ewald, and it is difficult to believe that he is the same individual as the "gallant young Chevalier" immortalized in verse and history:—

"Instead of the youth so chivalrous in his deeds, so gallant in his bearing, so generous in his sympathies, we meet with a manhood debased by vice, a temper rendered querulous and suspicious by disease, no refinement, no delicacy, nothing but humanity's coarsest grain . . . ." And again: "The shattered creature, with his bloated features and palsied energies, who quarrels with every one, ill-treats his mistress, ill-treats his wife, and never appears in public without being miserably in his cups."

And once more: "The Pretender's eldest son is drunk as soon as he rises, and is always senselessly so at night, when his servants carry him to bed. He is not thought of even by the exiles." (See further, *post*, p. 528.)

The Countess eventually left her husband on a divorce *a mensâ et thoro*, and retired to Rome, and after his death, in 1788, it is believed that she was privately married to Alfieri, though the fact is nowhere clearly stated and has been by some more than doubted. In the meantime, however, an extraordinary intimacy ensued between them, apparently of a platonic character, and his friendship for her served as a spur to him in his new literary life. To break off all ties with his country of Sardinia, he gave all his estates to his sister, reserving only an annual pension and a certain sum in money, which he unfortunately invested in French life annuities.

Continuing to work with wonderful energy, he had completed twelve of his tragedies by the beginning of 1782, that being the number to which he originally intended to limit himself. They were soon followed however by *Merope* and *Saul*, his masterpiece. These fourteen plays are those which stand first in the present collection. The Countess of Albany went to Rome in 1780, and he followed her there. In 1782 his *Antigone* was performed with great success in that city by a company of amateurs, he himself being one, and this determined him to print and publish the first four at once, which was done at Siena. Six more soon followed on his own arrival at Siena, he having found it necessary to leave Rome in May 1783, owing to the indignation of Charles Edward and his brother, Cardinal York, at his intimacy with the Countess. Directly afterwards, he hastened to England on a horse-buying expedition, and returned with a string of no less than fourteen. This led him to say that "for each tragedy he had got a horse," referring to the punishment inflicted on naughty schoolboys, in Italy, where the culprit is mounted on the shoulders of another boy, while the master applies the cane. He gives a most graphic account of the immense difficulties he encountered in bringing his stud safely home. The vinegar expended by Hannibal in crossing the Alps was far exceeded by the

wine which he himself had to expend in effecting the same crossing. On his arrival in Turin he saw his *Virginia* performed in the same theatre where his early *Cleopatra* had been acted nine years before.

Soon afterwards he followed the Countess, who had left Rome, to Colmar, and the sight of her, after a separation of sixteen months, again awakened his poetic genius, and he wrote the three tragedies of *Agis*, *Sophonisba*, and *Myrrha*. They were followed at no great interval by the two *Brutuses*, written under the amusing circumstances hereafter mentioned in the notes prefixed to *The First Brutus*. His tragedies being thus increased to nineteen in number, he made a solemn vow to Apollo to write no more, having however made and broken a similar vow previously. He next went to Paris, and arranged with Didot to print the whole work, in six volumes, whilst his miscellaneous writings were published at Kehl. The whole was completed by August 1789. (His posthumous works of *Abel* and *Alcestis II.* were not written by him till 1796 and 1799 respectively—a second breach of his vow to Apollo.)

Charles Edward had in the meantime died in 1788, and henceforward Alfieri and the Countess lived quietly together in Paris, paying a joint visit to England in 1791, when he saw accidentally at Dover, without speaking to her, the Lady L——, whose name had been so unfortunately connected with his twenty years before. She recognized him, and he gives in his Life a most interesting letter then written by her to him in reply to enquiries which he set on foot respecting her present situation.

They were once more in Paris when the great French Revolution broke out, and Alfieri witnessed the events of the terrible 10th August, 1792, when the Tuileries were taken by the mob, and Louis XVI. virtually ceased to reign. They determined on a hasty flight, and started on the 18th, duly provided with passports. On attempting to pass the barriers they were stopped by the mob, who insisted on their returning to Paris, exclaiming that all the rich were flying away, taking their treasures, and leaving the poor to starve behind them. Had they not been extricated by Alfieri's boldness and violent gesticula-

tions, there is little doubt that, if they had been compelled to return, they would have been included in the fearful massacre of the 2nd September. Alfieri gives an interesting account of the whole scene. They got safely to Calais, after having had to show their passports more than forty times, and proceeded by way of Brussels to Italy, learning afterwards that they were the first foreigners who had succeeded in escaping from France. From this time Florence was Alfieri's permanent dwelling-place. All their property in Paris was seized two days after their departure, and Alfieri's investments in the French funds were also confiscated.

In 1795, when he was forty-six years old; Alfieri taught himself Greek, and at the same time devoted himself to writing satires. His translations of the *Persae* of Æschylus, the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, the *Alcestis* of Euripides, and his own *Alcestis II.*, show how thoroughly he mastered the Greek language and appreciated the spirit of Greek literature. He likewise wrote six clever comedies, entitled respectively *The One*, *The Few*, *Too Many*, and *The Antidote* (these four being political); *La Finestrina*, the scene of which is laid in Hell; and *The Divorce*. These comedies all exhibit his powers as a satirist rather than as a dramatist. An excellent translation of Sallust also emanated from his prolific pen, and complete versions of Terence and the Æneid. Nor should his *Misogallo* be passed over in silence. It is a miscellaneous collection in prose and verse of the most violent and indiscriminate abuse of France and all things French, as its name implies. Besides the satires above referred to, he wrote several important prose works, the best known being two treatises on *Tyranny* and on *The Prince and Literature*, based on Machiavelli's *Principe;* and various poetical efforts, which need not now be further particularized. The posthumous works of Alfieri (including his Life) occupied no less than thirteen volumes, when first published in 1804, &c.

When the French entered Florence, in March 1799, Alfieri and the Countess retired to a villa in the country. They did the same on the second French occupation, in October 1800. The French Commander-in-chief desired

to make the acquaintance of Alfieri; but the latter replied that if he wrote to him as Commandant of Florence, he would yield to his superior authority; but that if it was merely as an individual, curious to see him, he must beg to be excused.

His bodily ailments soon afterwards became severe, and he discontinued his literary labors. On the 8th December, 1802, he put the finishing stroke to his works, and amused himself for the short remainder of his life in writing the conclusion of his Autobiography. His last amusement was the invention of a Collar, in honor of his having mastered the Greek language in his later years, on which were engraved the names of twenty-three ancient and modern poets, and to which was attached a cameo of Homer. On the back was a Greek distich, which may be thus Anglicised:—

> Perchance Alfieri made no great misnomer,
> When he dubb'd himself Knight of the Order of Homer.

With the account of this little incident Alfieri concludes the story of his life, dated 14th May, 1803. He died of an attack of gout in the stomach on the 8th October following, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. He was buried in the church of Santa Croce, at Florence, where repose the remains of Machiavelli, Michel Angelo, and Galileo. A marble monument, the work of Canova, was erected over his tomb by direction of the Countess of Albany, who survived him; is said to have consoled herself for his loss, soon after his death, with the friendship of a young painter named Fabre, and who lived till 1824. He wrote his own epitaph in Latin. An interesting account of his death is appended to his Memoirs, in the shape of a letter to the Countess from his most intimate friend the Abate di Caluso.

The following appears a fair summary of Alfieri's character: "He was an independent, candid, honest-hearted writer; and his example and his precepts gave a temper to the Italian mind which has not been lost. He formed a moral school, not numerous indeed, but including some of the brightest names in Italian literature of the present

age. His name is ever mentioned by the Italians with respect. He kept aloof from those attacks and sneers against religion and decency, in which weaker minds indulged in his time; on these points he gave no scandal to his Christian brethren. In his private character he was a warm and constant friend, and a man of honorable sentiments and conduct."

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I.

# PHILIP.

## THE ARGUMENT.

PHILIP the Second of Spain (the husband of Queen Mary of England) was, by his first wife, Mary of Portugal, the father of Don Carlos. The latter was originally betrothed to Elizabeth of France (who, however, is called Isabella in Alfieri's play); but for reasons of State policy his father Philip afterwards married her himself, as his third wife. Neither the Queen, however, nor her stepson, ever forgot their original attachment.

The scene is laid at Madrid, at the beginning of 1568, when Don Carlos was twenty-two years old, and commences with a short soliloquy by the Queen, in which she expresses her hopeless love for Carlos. He presently joins her, and, in the dialogue which ensues, their still-existing tenderness becomes apparent. It ends by her commanding him to avoid her presence for ever. On her departure, he is joined by his one true friend amongst all the courtiers, Perez, to whom he refuses to explain the cause of his secret sufferings. But the deep enmity existing between Philip and his son is apparent throughout these dialogues.

Philip himself next appears upon the scene with his

Minister, Gomez, whom he employs as his agent to bring about the ruin of the Queen and Carlos, whose continued affection he suspects. Isabella is sent for, and he informs her that he has discovered his son to be engaged in treacherous intrigues with the Batavian rebels. His language is artfully designed to ascertain the fact of her attachment to Carlos, who is next summoned to his presence, and has to hear the charges of his treason repeated, to which he makes a noble defence. But the result of the two interviews is to determine Philip on their destruction. The fears of Carlos are aroused, and at the beginning of the third act he entreats Isabella never to mention his name again to the king.

A Council of State is next held, when Philip, with the view of carrying out his intentions, informs the members that Carlos had attempted to murder him in his sleep, and asks them to judge him. Gomez urges that he should be put to death not only for this offence (for which there is no foundation in fact), but also for alleged treasonable negotiations with France. Leonardo (apparently the Grand Inquisitor) supports this view, on account of the pretended heresy of Carlos. Perez is the only one who ventures to defend him. Philip at length dismisses the Council, and desires them to meet again and pass sentence on Carlos.

The fourth act opens with a violent quarrel between Philip and Carlos, which ends in the arrest and imprisonment of the latter. Philip informs Isabella, on her entering, what he has done, on the ground of his own life having been attempted, and of hers being in danger from his son. When he has left, Gomez informs her that the Council had sentenced Carlos to death, and offers to obtain her an interview with the prisoner.

The interview takes place in the fifth act, when Isabella

urges Carlos to escape, but he tells her that she is being made the victim of the intrigues of Gomez, as is presently proved by the appearance of Philip on the scene. He overwhelms them with reproaches, which they haughtily repel, and announces their approaching doom. Gomez enters, holding a dagger with which he has just slain Perez, and also a bowl of poison. Philip offers them their choice of death. Carlos stabs himself, and Isabella does the same, after Philip had refused to allow her to drink the poison, with the intention of keeping her alive as her greatest punishment.

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This play (first published in 1783) upon the whole follows history with sufficient accuracy. Carlos, however, really died in prison after a few months' imprisonment, not without suspicion of his death having been hastened by poison or otherwise, by the command of his gloomy and vindictive father. It is especially interesting, as being the first of Alfieri's published tragedies, his posthumous *Antony and Cleopatra* having alone been written before it. Next to *Saul*, it is generally considered his best work; and as such is largely quoted from by Sismondi in his *Literature of the South of Europe*.

The great care shown by Alfieri in its production is evinced by the fact that he wrote no less than seven different versions of it (the first in Italian prose), in addition to the one ultimately published by him. The original sketch was in French prose. The first versified edition contained 1902 lines, whereas he compressed it at last into 1413 (which, however, Mr. Lloyd has extended again to about 1600).

The complete edition of the Tragedies contains a long and interesting letter addressed to Alfieri by his friend

Ranieri de' Calsabigi, minutely criticising four of them, including *Philip*. He considers the action uniform and natural, and the plot so simple, that the audience may guess it by the first scene. The characters are truthful, that of the courtier Gomez being perfect, and that of Philip drawn to the life, as the Spanish Tiberius, exactly corresponding to the account given by Tacitus of his Roman original: in his speech using "suspensa semper, et obscura verba", in character being "sine miseratione, sine irâ", and always showing himself "obstinatum, clausumque, ne quo affectu perrumperetur." Leonardo is a hypocrite worthy of such a master; Perez a rare example of virtue amongst so many vile courtiers; Isabella incautious, ingenuous, and tender; and Carlos such as he is described in the secret history of that dreadful reign of impiety, artifice, poison, and blood,—incautious, impetuous, exasperated. The suspicions of Philip dominate the whole scene; they are well put in motion and handled, and are the knot which the action twines and unties.

The tragical fate of Don Carlos has been made the subject of several other tragedies by Schiller, Otway, De Ximenes, Chénier, and Campistron (by the last in his play of *Andronic*).

# PHILIP.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| PHILIP. | PEREZ. |
| ISABELLA. | LEONARDO. |
| CARLOS. | *Councillors.* |
| GOMEZ. | *Guards.* |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Madrid.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ISABELLA.

*Isa.* Love, apprehension, and each wicked hope,
Leave ye my breast! I, Philip's faithless wife,
Dare I behold with fondness Philip's son?
Yet who beholds that son, and loves him not?
A heart, though bold, humane; a lofty nature;
An intellect sublime; and, in a form
Most fair, a soul of correspondent worth.
Ah, why did Heav'n and Nature make thee such?
Alas! why rave I thus? Do I intend,
By meditating thus on his perfections,
To tear his image from the deep recesses
Of my adoring heart? O, if a flame
So fatal in its consequences, were
By living man discover'd! O, if he
Suspected it! He sees me ever sad . . .
'Tis true, most sad; yet evermore avoiding
The fascination of his thrilling presence.

And from Spain's austere palace well he knows
All joy is banish'd. Who can read my heart?
O that with other mortals I could vie
In ignorance! that I could shun myself,
And thus deceive myself, as I can others! . . .
Unhappy I! My only solace left
Are tears; and mine, alas, are tears of guilt.—
But, that with less of risk I may indulge
My wretchedness, to some interior chamber
Let me retire in time . . . Ah, who is this?
Carlos? Ah, let me fly! My ev'ry look,
My ev'ry word, might now betray me. Hence
With speed!

SCENE II.

CARLOS, ISABELLA.

*Car.* O sight! what ails thee, queen, that thus
Thou shunn'st my presence? Dost thou thus avoid
A wretch by wrongs oppress'd?
*Isa.* Prince . . .
*Car.* Well I know,
My father's court is leagued against my safety.
That I, displeasing to my sire and king,
Should read impress'd on ev'ry countenance,
Enmity, malice, envy ill-conceal'd,
Excites no wonder. But I scarce believe
That thou, not harden'd by fell cruelty,
Thou, who beneath a more auspicious sky
Than this, wert born, and art not yet corrupted
By this infected atmosphere, concealest,
Beneath that soothing, yet majestic mien,
A bosom inaccessible to pity.
*Isa.* Within these thresholds what a life I lead
Too well thou know'st. The manners, new to me,
Of a pride-harden'd court, have not yet driven
The partial fondness for one's native soil,
That universal instinct, *from my breast.*
Thy pangs I know, *the insults undeserved*
That thou endurest; *know and pity them.*
*Car.* Thou pitiest them? *O sweetest consolation!*
That kind assurance sheds on all my cares

Benign forgetfulness. With thy griefs, too,
I sympathize; and thoughts of thy distress
Oft banish my own torments from my heart.
Tears for thy cruel lot I often shed,
And fain . . .
*Isa.* A lot more easy to endure,
I hope in time to gain. My ills with thine
Are not to be compared; then yield them not
A pity so intense.
*Car.* Does pity, then,
From me offend, when thine to me is life?
*Isa.* Thou prizest at a rate extravagant
That pow'rless pity.
*Car.* Ah! Extravagant?
What say'st thou? Tell me what emotion, then,
Excels or equals that soft beat of pity,
Thrilling the pulses of each noble heart?
Which, of itself, suffices to avenge
The wrongs of fortune; and no longer leaves
That heart unblest, whose comprehensive love
Embraces ev'rywhere the cause of man?
*Isa.* What say'st thou? Yes, I pity thee.—O Heav'ns!
I feel not tow'rds thee as a step-dame feels.
If for the unoffending son I dared
Plead to the angry father, in thy cause
My prayers should soon be heard.
*Car.* Who dare do this?
And further, if thou durst, 'twould misbecome thee.
O hard necessity! . . . Thou art the cause,
Innocent as thou art, of all my woes;
Yet I conjure thee in my favor . . .
*Isa.* I,
The cause of all thy anguish? . . .
*Car.* Yes, my anguish
May to that fatal day be all referr'd,
That day accursed that gave, and took thee from me.
*Isa.* Ah! what dost thou recall? Too transient was
That hope.
*Car.* The best part of myself, in me
That hope grew with my life, nursed by my sire,
That sire who will'd so solemn an engagement
Unkindly to dissolve.

*Isa.* Alas! . . .
*Car.* At once
Subject, and son, of monarch absolute,
I groan'd in agony, but held my peace;
I wept, but wept in secret. To my will
His will was law supreme. He was thy husband:
And from my uncomplaining passiveness,
Who but myself can sum up what I suffer'd!
From such an effort of transcendent virtue,
(Virtue it was, and passing human strength)
My heart was steep'd in pride and bitterness.
On duty's stern, inexorable law,
Mine eyes were ever fix'd. If e'en in thought
Nature was frail, I call to witness Heaven,
Who knows our inmost impulses. In tears
The day, in tears the tedious night I spent,
And what avail'd it? In my father's bosom
Hatred increased, as in my bosom grief.
*Isa.* Believe the' assurance, that thy father's heart,
Though tainted with suspicion, hates thee not.
P'rhaps in thy father's breast the train of courtiers
Have sown suspicion, who, from thy contempt,
The more they feel it just, the more detest thee . . .
*Car.* Alas! thou knowest not my father's nature,
And may kind Heav'n that ignorance prolong!
The treacherous intrigues of this vile court
To thee are all unknown. An upright heart
Could not believe, much less such guilt imagine.
More cruel than the sycophantic train
Surrounding him, 'tis Philip that abhors me.
He sets the example to the servile crowd;
His wrathful temper chafes at nature's ties;
Yet do not I forget that I'm his son.
If for one day I could forget that tie,
And rouse the slumbers of my smother'd wrongs,
Never, O never, should he hear me mourn
My ravish'd honors, my offended fame,
His hate unnatural and unexampled;
No, of a wrong more deep I would upbraid him . . .
He took my all, the day he tore thee from me.
*Isa.* Prince, dost thou, then, so little call to mind
That he's thy father, and thy king? . . .

*Car.* I pray thee,
Pardon the turbulence involuntary
Of a nigh-bursting heart. I never found
Before this moment the convenient time
To tell thee all my sorrows . . .
*Isa.* Nor should'st thou
Have told them now, nor should I listen to them . . .
*Car.* Stay! Since in part thou hast my sorrows heard,
Hear what remains. I am constrain'd to say . . .
*Isa.* Peace! Quit my presence.
*Car.* Madam, I obey.
I will refrain from words, but O, how much
Remains to utter! My last hope . . .
*Isa.* What hope,
That is not criminal, canst thou now cherish?
*Car.* . . . Hope . . . that thou dost not hate me.
*Isa.* I should hate thee,
And this thou knowest, . . . if thou dare to love me.
*Car.* Then give me proof of hatred, and thyself
Be my accuser to thy spouse and king. . . .
*Isa.* Shall I, before that king, pronounce thy name?
*Car.* Yes; if thou deem me guilty.
*Isa.* Is thy guilt
Unshared?
*Car.* In secret then perchance? . . .
*Isa.* Alas! . . .
What have I said? . . . or thou hast understood,
Or I have utter'd, more than duty warrants.
Think, I conjure thee, on thyself and me;
Thou, in persisting, I, in hearing thee,
Merit the king's revenge.
*Car.* Ah, if in heart
Thou wert inflamed, and pinedst as I pine,
And if thou saw'st a thousand times a day
The adored object in another's arms:
Thou would'st esteem it but a venial fault
To track the footsteps of thy ravish'd love;
To satisfy thine eyes; sometimes to seek,
As now I seek, an innocent relief
From a few accents, to thy breaking heart.
*Isa.* Ah, shun my presence! . . . While I pine in life,

'Twill be but for a little time, forsake
These fatal walls . . .
*Car.* O Heav'ns! and could I thus
Absent myself? My frustrated attempt
Would swell my list of crimes; and, as it is,
With crimes enough my father charges me.
The only one of which I guilty am,
He knows it not.
*Isa.* Ah, that I knew it not!
*Car.* If that offend thee, thou wilt have thy vengeance,
And that too, quickly. Let me linger here;
If to the grave my anguish bring me not,
The hatred of my sire will drag me there,
Who, in his heart of blood, has long resolved
My death. Within this horrible abode,
(Yet, since it shelters thee, how dear to me!)
Ah, suffer me, a victim in thy sight,
To breathe my latest sigh! . . .
*Isa.* Ah, sight of woe! . . .
While thou stay'st here, I fear too much thy fate.
A voice announces thy sad destiny
To my foreboding heart. At once receive
The first and latest pledge of hapless love.
Fly, I conjure thee, if thou love me truly,
From cruel Philip.
*Car.* 'Tis impossible.
*Isa.* Then fly my presence more than ever now,
And keep at once my fame untouch'd, and thine.
O, clear thyself of the invented fault
Of which thou'rt charged by jealous envy. Live,
'Tis I command thee, live! With thee my thoughts,
With thee my heart, in spite of all my struggles,
With thee my soul will go. Lose e'en the trace
Of my sad steps, nor let me hear thee more,
No, never. Heav'n alone our error knows.
Let us conceal it from the world, conceal it
E'en from ourselves: and from thy bosom rend
The rooted recollection . . . if thou canst.
*Car.* Wilt thou, then, no more hear me? never more?...[1]

[1] Attempts to follow her. She positively forbids it.

## SCENE III.

CARLOS.

*Car.* —Unhappy I! . . . O moment of distraction! . . .
And dost thou leave me thus? O cruel lot!
Sorrow and joy assail me in one moment . . .

## SCENE IV.

CARLOS, PEREZ.

*Per.* At last I've found thee, prince . . . but, Heav'ns! whence springs
Such agitation? what disturbs thee thus?
Thy transport seems to baffle reason's power . . .
My ready sympathy awaits thy grief.
Ah, speak! thou answer'st not! from earliest years
Have I not grown thy comrade at thy side?
Hast thou not call'd me friend? . . .
*Car.* Within these walls
Dar'st thou to such a word give utterance?
A word that's banish'd in its real meaning
From impious courts, though often there pronounced?
Useless to me, and fatal to thyself,
Henceforth will be thy faith. O imitate
The fickle crowd, and to the sov'reign idol
Present, with it, a profitable incense.
*Per.* Ah, do not thus degrade me: from that crowd
Sever me in thy judgment; . . . yet, what boots it
To swear affiance here? where all men swear it,
And all are perjured. To more certain proof
Bring both my hand and heart. Point out the danger
That I may brave for thee. Where is the foe
That most offends thee? Speak.
*Car.* No enemy,
Have I except my father. I disdain
To grace his parasites with such a name.
With silence his, their hate with scorn, I meet.
*Per.* The king knows not the truth: hence he's inflamed
Tow'rds thee with wrath unjust; and artfully
Others that wrath foment. In manly tones
I will assert it for thee . . .

*Car.* What say'st thou?
More than thou thinkest, Philip knows the truth;
He hates it rather than is ignorant:
But in my favor he hears no one speak . . .
*Per.* He must perforce the voice of nature hear.
*Car.* He has a heart inflexible as steel.
Leave to my innocence my best defence,
And to divine protection, which sometimes
Deigns to shed on it a benign regard.
If I were guilty, I would not disdain
As intercessor thee, and thee alone:
What greater proof of friendship can I give thee?
*Per.* Permit me, then, to share, whate'er it be,
Thy destiny; this, and no more, I ask:
In this flagitious court what other track
Is left, which can with honor be pursued?
*Car.* Perchance thou know'st not that my destiny,
Whate'er it be, can ne'er be fortunate.
*Per.* I am thy friend, and not the friend of fortune.
If it be true that grief, when shared, is lessen'd,
A persevering friend, thou shalt possess
Me, by thy side, in all adversity.
*Car.* My heart conceals a grief that ends in death;
A lofty grief, that yet is precious to me.
Why cannot I to thee reveal my thoughts? . . .
Ah, no! I do not seek, nor could I find,
A more disinterested friend than thou:
Yet by disburdening my heart oppress'd,
I cannot give thee a sure pledge of friendship.
Depart: what can result to thee from faith
So gen'rous, and so lucklessly affianced?
I am not worthy of so rich a tribute.
Once more I bid thee quit me. Know'st thou not,
'Tis an atrocious fault to fix thy love
On one tow'rds whom his king directs his hate?
*Per.* But know'st thou not, in spite of ev'ry king,
What glory 'tis that friendship to preserve?
Thou piercest, but thou changest not my heart,
With doubting thus my faith. A mortal grief,
A grief thou may'st not speak, weighs on thy breast?
I do not wish to know it. But if I

Wish, yea implore, that, with thy life, my life
May fall a victim to that grief, canst thou
Harshly reject that brotherhood in woe?
*Car.* Well, as thou wilt. Here is my plighted hand,
Disastrous pledge of a disastrous friendship.
Thee do I pity: but shall not bewail
Henceforth my fate; nor providence upbraid,
So bounteous to me in so rare a friend.
Philip, how much am I more blest than thou!
Thou, 'midst vain pomp and treach'rous adulation,
Object of pity rather than of envy,
Hast never known the blessedness of friendship.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

PHILIP, GOMEZ.

*Phi.* What, above all things that this world can give,
Dost thou hold dear?
*Gom.* Thy favor.
*Phi.* By what means
Dost hope to keep it?...
*Gom.* By the means that gain'd it:
By silence and obedience.
*Phi.* *Thou art call'd*
This day to practise both.
*Gom.* *'Tis no new function:*
Thou know'st that I...
*Phi.* I know that thou hast been,
Among the faithful, still most faithful found.
But on this day, on which my mind revolves
Affairs of import high, perchance my lips
Will utt'rance give to plans so new and vast,
That, as a prologue to my after-speech,
It seem'd to me expedient to recall,
In a few words, thy duties to thy mind.
*Gom.* Then may the mighty Philip, on this day,
More thoroughly than he has ever done,
Bring to the test my truth.
*Phi.* The task is light

That I enjoin; and light alone to thee:
Never, no never, to another man.—
The queen forthwith is coming. Thou wilt hear me
Converse with her at length. Meanwhile do thou
Watch the minutest workings of her face.
Fasten on her thy look inquisitorial,
That look with which thou'rt skilful to unravel
All the unspoken inmost inclinations
Of thy king's inmost heart, ere silently
Thou dost embody them in execution.

## Scene II.

PHILIP, ISABELLA, GOMEZ.

*Isa.* My lord, I come, obedient to thy will.
*Phi.* Queen, thou art summon'd on a weighty matter.
*Isa.* Ah! wherefore . . .
*Phi.* Quickly shalt thou hear it, madam.—
Can I expect it from thee? . . . Yet why doubt?
Who can with more sincerity impart
Than thou, impartial counsel to my breast?
*Isa.* Counsel, my lord, from me? . . .
*Phi.* Than that of others,
More I esteem thy judgment: hitherto
If thou hast never shared with me the toils
Of government, thou shouldest not ascribe it
To the defective fondness of thy husband,
Nor to thy king's defective confidence,
But to my fond anxiety to screen thee
From toils of state too weighty for thy sex.
But, to my sorrow, I behold the day
On which a question of debate arises,
Where ties of blood with schemes of policy
Are so confounded, that, by nature, thou
Art designated my prime counsellor.—
But first I feel inclined to hear from thee,
Whether thou judgest of most sanctity,
Most to be dreaded, most to be revered,
The name of father, or the name of king?
*Isa.* They're held by all of equal sanctity.
Who knows not this? . . .
*Phi.* He who most ought to know it.—

But tell me also, ere the fact I state,
And tell without reserve: dost love, or hate,
Carlos my son? . . .
*Isa.* My lord? . . .
*Phi.* I understand thee.
If thou didst yield to thy first impulses,
And not obey the stern behests of duty,
Thou would'st behold him as thy . . . stepson.
*Isa.* No.
Thou art deceived . . . The prince . . .
*Phi.* Is dear then to thee.
Yet hast thou so much of true honor left,
That being Philip's wife, that Philip's son
Thou lov'st with . . . love maternal.
*Isa.* Thou alone
Art law to all my thoughts. Thou lovest him . . .
At least I deem so . . . and e'en so I love him.
*Phi.* Since thy well-regulated, noble heart
Beholds not Carlos with a step-dame's thought,
Nor with blind instinct of maternal fondness,
I choose thee for that Carlos as a judge . . .
*Isa.* Me? . . .
*Phi.* Thou hast heard it. Carlos the first object
Was many many years of all my hopes,
Till, having turn'd his footsteps from the path
Of virtue, he those lofty hopes betray'd.
How many pleas did I, from time to time,
Frame to excuse my disobedient son!
But now his mad and impious hardihood
Hath reach'd its greatest height; and I'm compell'd,
Compell'd against my will, to means of force.
To his past crimes such turpitude he adds,
Such, that, compared with this, all others vanish;
Such, that words fail me to express his baseness.
With outrage so immense he hath assail'd me,
As all comparison to baffle; such,
That, from a son, no father could expect it;
Such, that no longer I account him son . . .
Ah! thou e'en shudder'st ere thou know'st its vastness? . . .
Hear it, and shudder in another fashion.—
More than five years, thou know'st, a wretched band

On swampy soil, and shores whelm'd by the ocean,
Have dared my sov'reign mandate to resist;
Rebels no less to God than to their king.
They find in their repeated crimes defence.
Thou know'st with what expense of blood and treasure
This realm hath borne this sacrilegious war.
I would not suffer that rebellious crew
To go unpunish'd, with mock majesty
To triumph in their crimes, though perseverance
In such a cause cost both my throne and life.
To immolate the impious generation
As victims of my wrath, I swear to Heaven.
And death perchance may be a benefit
To those who spurn at all authority.—
Now, who from me would credit the assurance
That with such dreadful, such ferocious foes,
I am compell'd to' enumerate my son,
Alas! my own, my only son? . . .

*Isa.* The prince? . . .

*Phi.* The prince, yes: many intercepted letters,
Clandestine messages, seditious words
Pronounced incautiously, of this dire fact
Too certainly convince me! I conjure thee
To picture to thy mind my agonies,
As sire betray'd, as circumvented king;
And to pronounce what lot by justice falls
From me, his sire, on such an impious son.

*Isa.* O God! Thou will'st that I pronounce his fate? . . .

*Phi.* Yes, thou of that art arbitress supreme.
Fear not the monarch, flatter not the father:
Pronounce.

*Isa.* I fear alone offending justice.
In presence of the throne, the innocent
Are ofttimes undistinguish'd from the guilty . . .

*Phi.* Canst thou then doubt of what thy king affirms?
Who more than I can wish him innocent?
Ah, would that the impeachment were unfounded!

*Isa.* By clearest evidence he stands convicted? . . .

*Phi.* Who can convict him? Turbulent and headstrong,
He scorns to bring against the clearest proofs
Some palliative pretexts, much less reasons.

I would not, of this latest misdemeanor,
With him hold conference, till I had calm'd
The first emotions of my just resentment.
But though my rage be mute, stern policy
Moves me to speak . . . Alas! the voice of father,
That agonizing voice, resounds within me . . .
*Isa.* Ah, hear that voice! no voice can equal it.
Perchance he's less a culprit than thou thinkest; . . .
Indeed his guilt on this emergency
Seems too impossible to challenge credence.
Hear him thyself, whatever be his crimes:
Who than a son, between a son and father,
Can be a mediator more persuasive?
Granted that he be haughty when with those
Not friendly to the truth, assuredly
Thy presence will subdue his pride. To him
Open thine ears, and harden not thy heart
To the soft influence of paternal love.
Him to thy presence never dost thou summon,
Never speak to him. He approaches thee
Impress'd with fear; and love and confidence
Are scared by thy inflexible reserve.
Revive within him, if it be suppress'd,
His native virtue; 'tis impossible
That, in thy son, it can be quite extinguish'd.
To no one else trust thy paternal cares;
Present to him the aspect of a father,
Reserve a monarch's majesty for others.
What, from a gen'rous heart, may not be gain'd
By gen'rous treatment? If he be convicted
Of some delinquency, (and who is perfect?)
To him alone do thou alone display
The indignation thou dost justly feel.
There is affection in a father's wrath;
What son can witness it, and tremble not?
One accent that paternal love dictates
Would, in that noble breast, remorse more deep
Excite, and less of rancor, than a hundred,
Malignantly, and artfully pronounced,
To drive him on to acts of desperation,
By treach'rous, seeming friends. Let thy court hear

That thou dost highly prize, and love, thy son;
That thou accountest his impetuous youth
Worthy of pardon, though not free from blame;
And thou wilt hear, with one consenting voice,
Thy universal court resound his praise.
Suspicions not thine own tear from thine heart;
And leave base apprehensions of foul treason
To monarchs who deserve to be betray'd.

*Phi.* This action, worthy of thyself, is thine
Alone; to make the cry of nature reach
A father's heart: ah, others act not thus!
O wretched lot of kings! they cannot utter,
Tremble to utter, much less dare obey,
Nature's benign affections. Nay, so far
From even daring to make mention of them,
They are compell'd, by interests of state,
To stifle and dissemble utterly
Natural impulses.—The time is come,
When in my breast they shall find free admission.
Thy intercession, more than thou dost think,
Hath torn the veil from ev'ry mystery...
Almost am I compell'd to deem him guiltless,
Since thou dost think him so.—Without delay
Command the presence, Gomez, of the prince.

## Scene III.

PHILIP, ISABELLA.

*Phi.* Thou now shalt see that to the guilty prince
I can appear, more than is fit, a father;
More than I could, if e'er compell'd to meet him
In all the terrors of a king offended.

*Isa.* I do not doubt thy promise. But he comes:
Suffer me to depart.

*Phi.* Stay—I command thee.

*Isa.* I've ventured to express my thoughts to thee,
Since thou would'st have it so. Why tarry longer?
The presence of a step-dame, when a son
Meets an offended father, were intrusive...

*Phi.* Intrusive? No. Thou dost deceive thyself:
Thou art a necessary witness, too.

Thou hast alone a step-dame's name. For once
From thy remembrance banish e'en the name.—
Thy presence will be grateful to my son.
Ah, see, he comes: and he shall be inform'd
That thou hast freely pledged thyself to me
As surety for his virtue, faith, and love.

## SCENE IV.

PHILIP, ISABELLA, CARLOS, GOMEZ.

*Phi.* Approach me, prince.—Now tell me, when will dawn
That day in which, with the fond name of son,
Thy father may accost thee? Thou should'st see,
(Ah, would'st thou have it so!) combined together
The name of father and of king; ah, why,
Since thou lov'st not the one, fear'st not the other?

*Car.* My lord, though these unmerited reproaches,
Ere now, have often jarr'd upon my ears,
They always sound most harsh and unprovoked.
Silence from thee seems not so wonderful;
Guilty I am, if in thy sight I seem so.
'Tis true my heart assents not to the charge;
Free from conviction and remorse it glows,
But not the less profound regret it feels
That thou dost deem that I'm a guilty man.
O, could I trace the source of my misfortunes,
Or, if the phrase seem more appropriate,
Know the true origin of my offences!

*Phil.* Thy love, so lukewarm tow'rds thy native country;
And tow'rds thy father thy . . . no love at all;
Thy intercourse with crafty flatterers . . .
Enquire no further why thou dost offend me.

*Car.* I'm pleased, at least, that thou hast not ascribed
This to a nature innately perverse.
I may make some amends for what is past;
Learn with what fondness I should love my father,
And how to love my country; learn the means
To banish flatt'rers, who the more assail thee,
As thou'rt possess'd of greater pow'r than I.

*Phi.* —Thou'rt still a youth: thy heart, thy look, thy actions,

Too plainly tell that much beyond discretion
Thou trustest to thyself. This I should deem
Only a venial error of thy age,
If I did not with disappointment witness,
That, as thy years advance, thy judgment seems,
Instead of perfecting, more immature.
I shall account thy error of to-day
A youthful indiscretion, though, alas!
It bears the marks of vet'ran turpitude...
*Car.* Error!...but what?...
*Phi.* And thou dost ask it of me?—
And art thou not aware that all thy thoughts,
Much more thy daring deeds, thy thoughts most secret,
To me are all reveal'd?—Queen, thou beholdest;
'Tis not to be, but not to feel himself
Worthy of blame, that constitutes his guilt.
*Car.* Father, at last from doubt deliver me:
What have I done?
*Phi.* Are, then, thy crimes so many,
That thou dost doubt of which I speak?—Now hear me:—
Say, hast thou not had commerce with that soil
Where most the furnace of sedition blazes?
E'en in my palace . . . didst thou not perchance,
Before the dawn of day, clandestinely, . . .
Receive in trait'rous and protracted audience
The orator of the Batavian rebels?
That villain who comes begging for compassion,
If we believe his words, but who, in heart,
Perfidious machinations cherishes,
And projects of rebellion unavenged.
*Car.* Father, must my most unimportant actions
Be all ascribed to guilt? 'Tis true, I spoke
At length to the ambassador; 'tis true
That I, with him, compassionate the fate
Of those thy hapless subjects, and I dare
Avow the same compassion in thy presence.
Nor thou thyself would'st long withhold thy pity,
Provided that, like me, thou hadst all heard
Of the harsh government, in which, oppress'd
Beneath proud, avaricious, inexpert,

Weak, cruel, yet unpunish'd ministers,
So many years they've groan'd. For their misfortunes
My heart with pity bleeds; I boldly own it:
And say, would'st thou, that I, the son of Philip,
Possess'd a vulgar or a cruel heart?
Yes, too presumptuous was perchance the hope
That I, with stating the unvarnish'd truth,
Could wake, this day, thy bosom to compassion.
But how can I be thought to wrong a father
In holding him accessible to pity?
If thou on earth dost wish to represent
The Ruler of the skies, what attribute
Like that of mercy, fixes the resemblance?—
But, notwithstanding, of my punishment
Thou'rt arbiter supreme, if I appear,
Or am, on this occasion criminal.
The only boon I dare to challenge of thee,
Is to be spared the' unworthy name of traitor.
*Phi.* . . . A noble pride breathes in thy ev'ry word.
Ill canst thou, nor should'st thou affect to do so,
The lofty motives penetrate or judge,
That influence thy king. Hence thou should'st tame
That turbulence undisciplined; that bold
Impatient wish to give advice unask'd;
Thy judgments, as if fraught with mighty sense,
Officiously to offer. Caution learn,
If on the mightiest of the thrones of Europe
Thou'rt destined to be honor'd by the world.
That indiscretion now in thee may please,
Which then may cast upon thy character
A stain of deep reproach. 'Tis time, I warn thee,
To wear a new deportment.—Thou hast sought
Pity from me, and pity thou hast found;
But for thyself: all are not worthy of it.
Leave me to be sole judge of my own measures.—
Erewhile in thy behalf, and not in vain,
The queen at length address'd me. Of my love,
No less than of her own, she deems thee worthy . . .
To her, more than to me, thou ow'st thy pardon . . .
To her. From this day forward I expect
That thou wilt better know both how to prize,
And how deserve my favor.—Now behold,

By thy solicitations I am won,
O queen; and, urged by thee, consent to learn
Not only to forgive, but love my son.
*Isa.* My lord . . .
*Phi.* To thee I owe it, and to thee
Alone. For thee have I repress'd my wrath,
And in the loving character of father
Have I reproved my son. Of this day's mercy
May'st thou ne'er give me reason to repent!—
O son! that thou may'st not defeat her hope,
Strive to attach her more by thy deportment.
That he may be progressive in amendment,
Do thou, O queen, more frequently permit him
Thy presence to enjoy . . . speak to him . . . guide him . . .
And lister to her thou, and shun her not.—
I will that it be so.
*Car.* O how the name
Of pardon, when address'd to me, is irksome!
But if I must accept it from my father,
And, madam, thou obtain that pardon for me,
May my fate grant (my fate my only crime!)
That I may ne'er again endure such shame.
*Phi.* Rather should'st thou take shame to need a pardon,
Than, needing, to have gain'd it from thy father.
Let this for once suffice: weigh well my words.—
Do thou, O queen, withdraw to thy apartments;
There shalt thou see me soon: I now must give
To other weighty cares a few brief moments.

## SCENE V.[1]

PHILIP, GOMEZ.

*Phi.* Didst hear?
*Gom.* I heard.
*Phi.* Didst see?
*Gom.* I saw.
*Phi.* O rage!
Suspicion, then . . .
*Gom.* Is certainty.

[1] This scene exhibits in perfection the peculiarities of Alfieri's style. I have re-written it, as Mr. Lloyd's translation is more diffuse than the original.—E. A. B.

*Phi.* Is Philip
Still unavenged?
*Gom.* Think...
*Phi.* I have thought.—Now follow.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

CARLOS, ISABELLA.

*Car.* Pardon, O pardon, my unwonted boldness:
If at a late and unaccustom'd hour
I ask'd through thy Elvira a brief audience,
I was impell'd to this by urgent motives.
*Isa.* What is thy wish?... Why dost thou not resolve
To leave me to myself? Why seek to lessen
That peace I scarcely have?... why came I here?
*Car.* Be pacified. I'll leave thee instantly;
Leave thee, and to my wonted tears return.
Listen to me. Erewhile thou dared'st entreat
My father in my favor: a great fault
Didst thou commit; I come to tell thee of it.
And grant, kind Heav'n, that I alone may feel
Its punishment! He deign'd to make a show
Of austere pity, and pronounced my pardon,
A pledge with him of greater persecution.
The spectacle of pity in another
Maddens the cruel bosom of a tyrant:
Of this thy unsuspecting nature dreamt not;
I come here to remind thee of this truth:
And to assure thee that, of storms of hatred,
In Philip's nature, pity is the prelude.
A terror that my heart ne'er knew before,
From that sad moment seized it. Heav'ns! I know not:
In language new he spake to me; of love,
Of unaccustom'd love, made vain display.
Ah, never more to him pronounce my name!
*Isa.* To me he first spoke of thee; and almost
Constrain'd me to reply. His boiling rage
Seem'd by my accents wholly pacified.

And now, when he had just address'd himself
To thee, in accents of paternal love,
He wept, and praised thee in my presence. Think,
He is thy father: can I e'er believe
That thee, his only son, he does not love?
Resentment blinds thee; thou supposest in him
Hatred that cannot in his heart take root...
Ah, hapless destiny, I am the cause
That thou'rt from him estranged.
*Car.* O noble lady!
Ill dost thou know us both. I hate him not,
Although I shudder at his presence. True,
I envy him a prize of which he robb'd me,
And which he merits not. Its matchless worth,
No, no, he cannot feel. Yet, wert thou happy,
My grief were less intense.
*Isa.* Despite thyself,
Thou turn'st to thy accustom'd lamentations.
I leave thee, prince. Henceforward be assured
That I will weigh with care each word, each gesture,
Ere I pronounce thy name in Philip's presence.
I also fear... the son more than the father.

## Scene II.

CARLOS.

*Car.* O noble heart! ill fitted for suspicion,
O, whither hasten'st thou?... But who approaches?...

## Scene III.

GOMEZ, CARLOS.

*Car.* What will'st thou, Gomez?
*Gom.* I expect the king,
Who, at this hour, enjoin'd me here to meet him.—
Mean time, O prince, admit me to a share
Of the just transport which must overwhelm thee,
At the recover'd favor of thy father.
As far as I have credit in his presence,
I do assure thee I have always spoken
In thy behalf; I'm ready even more...

## SCENE IV.

GOMEZ.

*Gom.* . . . Intolerably proud; . . . but, more incautious.

## SCENE V.

PHILIP, LEONARDO, PEREZ, GOMEZ, COUNCILLORS, AND GUARDS.

*Phi.* Guards! see that no one dare to enter here.—
I summon you, my faithful few adherents,
To an unusual meeting . . . Listen to me.
But, ere I speak, what horror overwhelms me!
What icy coldness shoots through all my veins!
The tears stand in my eyes. My tremulous voice,
As if it fear'd to be the instrument
Of my heart's heaviness, in broken accents
Falters . . . Should I, then, speak? Yes, duty bids me;
Not I, my country wills it.—Who would think it?
Among you here convened I seat myself
The' accuser, not the judge: that cannot be:
And were not I of such a criminal
The' accuser, who would hazard the attempt?—
Ah, me! e'en now I see you take alarm;
All shudder . . . What will, then, your feelings be
When I'm constrain'd to speak the name of Carlos?
*Leon.* Thy only son?
*Per.* Of what can he be guilty? . . .
*Phi.* By an ungrateful son my peace is ruin'd;
That peace, which each of you, more blest than I,
Feels in the bosom of his family.
In vain have I adopted tow'rds my son
Rigor, with mildness temper'd; vainly tried
By warm reproof to spur him on to virtue:
To prayers and to example deaf alike,
And still more deaf to menaces, he adds
One trespass to another; and to these
Impious presumption. So that, at their height,
This day has fill'd the measure of his crimes.
Yes, though I gave to him this day new proofs
Of indiscreet affection, he selects
This very day to give his father's heart
The last proofs of unheard-of wickedness.—

Scarce had the glowing orb that rules the day,
The shining witness of my daily actions,
Retired to cheer my transatlantic realms,
Than with the shades of night, to traitors friendly,
A project horrible and black arose
Within the heart of Carlos. Silently,
Vengeance to take for his forgiven crimes,
He steals with murd'rous footsteps to my chamber.
His right hand with a parricidal sword
He dared to arm: approach'd me unawares;
The weapon lifts; and is about to plunge it
Into my undefended side . . . when, lo!
All unexpectedly, a voice exclaims:
"Philip, be on thy guard!" It was Rodrigo,
Who came to me. At the same time I feel
The stroke, as of a lightly grazing sword
Defeated of its aim. My eager eyes
Glance through the obscure distance. At my feet
A naked sword I see; and in swift flight
Remote, amid the night's uncertain shadows,
Behold my son. I now have told you all.
If there be those among my friends convened,
Who can accuse him of another fault;
If there be those who can of this fault clear him,
Speak without hesitation: and may Heaven
Inspire his words! This is a fearful matter;
My councillors, deliberately weigh it.
A solemn judgment ye are now convened
To pass upon my son . . . and on myself.

*Gom.* . . . What dost thou ask, O king? Can we betray
Philip, betray ourselves? But can we plunge
The murd'rous weapon in a father's heart?
Put not our truth to so severe a test.

*Leon.* The day may come, O king, when thou thyself
May'st bitterly repent to know the truth;
When thou may'st make us also, who thus dare
To speak it in thy ears, repent our rashness.

*Per.* The truth can never injure. From our lips
It is demanded of us. Speak we, then.

*Phi.* The king, and not the father, listens to you.

*Gom.* I then will speak the first; the first will brave
The anger of a father; for thou art

A father still; and in that countenance
Purposely stern, less menacing than troubled,
'Tis plain that if the king accuses Carlos,
The father spares the son, and his misdeeds
Thou wilt not, p'rhaps canst not, enumerate.—
It seem'd a light delinquency to Carlos
To make a compact with thy rebel subjects:
Here is a paper found upon his person,
In which at once he covenants our ruin,
And his own infamy. He dares to treat
With France, yes, with detested France to treat.
Here ye will read an infamous surrender
Of Catalonia and Navarre proposed,
And other fertile provinces, attached
By our forefathers' valor to the throne
Of Spain, and there by our own sweat and blood
Firmly retain'd. A portion so important
Of such a mighty realm, a prey to France
Is offer'd, as the execrable price
Of execrable aid, lent to the son
Against the father; what remains of Spain
Will be oppress'd, with foul impunity,
By that deceitful offspring of a father,
Whose sense, whose strength, are competent to wield
The sceptre of the universal world.
Behold what destiny awaits us.—Ah!
Thy life is indispensable, O king,
To us, thy sacred life! But equally
The far-famed glory of the Spanish empire
To us is indispensable and sacred.
'Tis guilt in all its worst atrocity
To plan the murder of a king and father;
But in one moment to betray one's honor,
One's country to betray (I am compell'd
Thus by a dire necessity to speak,)
P'rhaps is no less a crime. Thou might'st excuse
The first, which most concerns thyself. The other...
That also thou might'st be inclined to pardon:—
But when they both in foul array are join'd,
With such a list of trait'rous trespasses,
What other doom can I pronounce than death?

*Per.* Death! Is it death thou sayest?

*Phi.* O great Heav'ns!...

*Leon.* Who would believe that I'm compell'd to add
To the detested names of parricide,
Traitor and rebel, one more foul than these?
Yet there remains another epithet
Of such atrocity, that mortal tongue
Dare scarcely give it utterance.

*Phi.* It is?...

*Leon.* Blasphemer of the majesty of Heaven.—
O God omnipotent, deign to inspire
The words of me, Thy vile, yet faithful servant!
The day is come, the moment is arrived,
When Thou, with one retributory flash
Of Thy tremendous and avenging looks,
Shalt cast to earth him, who, in pride of heart,
Hath long presumed Thy terrors to defy.
Thou makest me to be an instrument
Of Thy offended majesty; and givest
My swelling breast a superhuman boldness;
A boldness worthy of the cause.—O hear,
Thou monarch of the earth, by my lips hear,
What, in His terrors, the offended King
Of Heav'n inspires. The prince, whom I account
So impious, that I dare not of my king
Call him the son; the prince unceasingly,
With lips impure, pronounces blasphemies,
No less injurious to high Heav'n itself
Than to its hallow'd ministers. The cry,
The cry profane doth reach the house of God:
He mocks the worship of his ancestors,
And patronizes the new heresy:
And we should see, were he upon the throne,
The sacred altars levell'd with the ground,
And each mysterious symbol of our worship
Trodden to dust with sacrilegious feet.
And we should see... But if until that time
The flaming sword of God delay'd its office,
A sight like this should never blast my eyes;
They who preferr'd not death to such a sight
Alone should witness it. I would not see
The sacred veil profanely torn away
Which from the vulgar gaze doth hide the truth

In which they, understanding not, believe:
Nor the destruction see which he hath sworn,
Of that august tribunal, which, on earth,
Presents an image of supernal justice,
And makes that justice less inflexible:
Of that tribunal, which preserves entire,
And pure our faith, in spite of all our foes.
May Heav'n confound the impious wish! May hell
In vain conspire to aid it!—Lift thine eyes,
Thou earthly monarch, to the King of Heaven.
To Him thou ow'st thy life, thy pow'r, thy honor.
He can take all away: if He's offended,
Thy son the culprit is. Look on him, see
The fatal sentence legibly inscribed:
Without delay fulfil it... On his head,
Let Heav'n, which he has outraged, hurl its vengeance.

*Per.* 'Tis difficult to find opinions frank
Within the bosoms of a servile throng;
Nor is it seldom that the sentiments
Most freely utter'd are themselves constrain'd;
And baseness in its multifarious changes
Can clothe itself in feign'd audacity.—
Listen to me, O king, and thou shalt hear
Free thoughts express'd with freedom. Listen to me,
And thou shalt see another sort of boldness.—
The scroll is forged. The' accusers disagree,
And contradict each other. If the prince
With parricidal hand approach'd his father,
What from the foolish compact could he hope
With the Batavian rebels? To what purpose
The succor of the French? Why share with them
His heritage? Divide, without a motive,
Realms over which he held a rightful sway?—
But if by means so impious and so strange
He wish'd to lighten his own destiny,
Why so incautiously attempt the deed?
Or why contrive such guilt, and in the midst
Desist? O'ercome by what?—If such a crime,
By such a means attempted he, I deem him
Rather a madman than a murderer.
He knows that always in defence of kings
(E'en though they hate them) emulously watch

Those who derive from them wealth, splendor, rank.
Thou saw'st thy son in flight. I shrewdly guess
Thou saw'st him with the eyes of other men.
Let him come here, and speak in his own cause.
In the mean time, that he has not assail'd
Thy life I swear, yea, by my head, I swear it;
Or, if that oath suffice not, by my honor:
That honor o'er which kings have no control.
What shall I say of the impiety,
In which, with tones of holy indignation,
A lying piety hath dared impeach him? . . .
What boots it that I say that those there are,
Beneath a veil of well-assumed devotion,
Who hide the basest motives; who confound
Their int'rests with the int'rests of great Heaven,
And artfully, with their feign'd zeal, contrive
To be the ministers of blood and outrage?
Who knows it not?—And further I affirm,
The prince hath always proved that he possess'd
A heart humane, a lofty sense of honor,
A soul as beauteous as the form it dwells in:
His father's fondest hopes he realized,
E'en from his earliest years: Thou saidst 'twas so,
And all believed thy words. I think so still:
'Tis not in nature that a mind should pass,
Distinguish'd for its virtue, to the height,
At once, of guilt. That he has always suffer'd
His wrongs, so many, and so oft repeated,
With silence, weeping, and profound submission,
I can bear witness.—It is true, though strange,
That tears are construed sometimes into guilt;
And there are hearts of such a wrathful mould,
That grief their anger wakes, instead of pity . . .
Ah, thou'rt a father; harden not thy heart;
Weep with thy weeping son; he is not guilty;
But of the wretched, wretchedest of men.—
Yet, if he were a thousand times more guilty
Than they cry out, a father never can,
And never should, condemn his son to death.
*Phi.* . . . Pity, at last, I find in one of you,
And pity will obey. I am a father,
And to the feelings of a father yield.

Myself, my kingdom, all that I possess,
I do abandon to the' arbitrament
Inscrutable of Heav'n. Yes, Carlos maybe
Is but the minister of heav'nly wrath.
Perish my kingdom, perish Philip rather,
But let my son be safe. I pardon him.
*Gom.* Thou mak'st thyself, then, greater than the laws?
Why summon us? Thou may'st without our aid
Evade the laws. Absolve, absolve, thou mayest:
But if one day thou find thy pity fatal . . .
*Per.* Pity like this, indeed, will fatal prove;
'Tis too unusual to portend a blessing . . .
But I protest, whate'er the issue be,
That this debate, to which I've rashly ventured,
Is not a council: life I value not;
My fame I still hold dear. The world shall know
That I've not bathed my hands in guiltless blood.
Let those who will remain.—To Heav'n alone
My silent prayers I raise: the truth to Heaven
Is manifest . . . Why do I say to Heaven? . . .
If I look round me, am I not convinced
That all whom I survey the whole truth know?
That all conceal it? That to hear it, speak it,
Hath here long been a capital offence?
*Phi.* To whom speak'st thou?
*Per.* Of Carlos to his father . . .
*Phi.* And to thy king.
*Leon.* Thou art the sire of Carlos:
And who in thee the conflict does not trace
Of a despairing father? Recollect
That thou art father also of thy subjects,
And that as much as he despises it,
They prize the name of son. The prince is one;
They, an innumerable multitude.
That one protect, the rest are all in danger.
He's criminal, the rest all innocent;
Dost stand in doubt 'twixt saving one, or all?
*Phi.* O do not thus, by oft-repeated thrusts,
Plunge in my heart the dagger: pause awhile:
I have not strength to listen to you more.

Let a new council forthwith be assembled
Out of my sight. There let the priests assist,
In whom all worldly impulses are dead.
By their means truth may be made manifest:
'Tis truth alone we need.—Meet, and pass sentence.
My presence might too much restrain the right; . . .
Or bring to too severe a test my virtue.

### Scene VI.

PHILIP.

*Phi.* . . . O! . . . what may be the number of the traitors?
Can Perez be so bold? Can he have read
My secret heart? . . . Ah, no! . . . but yet what boldness!
What boiling pride! And can a soul so form'd
Spring where I reign?—and where I reign, exist?

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## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

CARLOS.

*Car.* Shadows of night, far more than beams of day,
Suiting the horrors of this guilty palace,
With mournful joy I witness your return!
'Tis not that from your influence my grief
Finds intermission: but that, for a time,
I lose the sight of faces that appal me.—
Here did Elvira pledge herself to meet me
In Isabella's name: what would she tell me? . . .
Profound the silence! . . . 'mid their gnawing cares,
Spite of remorse, and spite of dark suspicion,
Does placid slumber from on high descend
To seal the eyes of tyrants and of traitors?
That sleep which flies from innocence oppress'd?
But sleepless nights to me are not unwelcome:
I hold communion with the dear impression
Of all that's fair and virtuous. 'Tis my solace
Here to return where last I parted from her,

And heard expressions, that in one swift moment
Gave me both life and death. Ah, far less wretched,
But far more criminal, than heretofore,
I deem myself since that eventful meeting . . .
Whence does this visionary horror rise?
Is it the pain that wrings a guilty conscience? . . .
Yet wherefore? How have I been criminal?
I was not silent, true: but who that felt
Such throes of passion ever could conceal them?—
I hear, or seem to hear, approaching footsteps.
Elvira comes . . . ah, no! what deaf'ning clamor! . . .
Who is't approaches? What a flash of torches!
Arm'd men draw nigh! Ye traitors, come . . .

## Scene II.

*Soldiers, with Arms and Torches.*

PHILIP, CARLOS.

*Car.* O Heav'ns!
My father, with so many arm'd attendants?
*Phi.* At night, alone, arm'd, and in these apartments,
What art thou doing? what dost meditate?
Whither art going? Speak.
*Car.* . . . What shall I say? . . .
The arms I grasp'd at the supposed approach
Of bloody ruffians, in my father's presence
Fall from my hands. Dost thou conduct them? . . . Thou,
My father?—At thy will dispose of me.
But tell me: was it needful to use pretexts?
And such as these! . . . Ah, father! pretexts are
Unworthy of a king;—apologies
From my lips now were only more unworthy.
*Phi.* Dost add presumption to thy other crimes?
Display it, then, for evermore it is
The sure attendant of consummate guilt:
Thou throw'st a cloak of ill-assumed respect
Over thy faithless and ambitious nature;
Thou dost not seek to palliate thy offences:
To give full vent to thy atrocious rage
Would better suit thy purpose. Pour it out,
The deadly poison that thy heart contains;

With a magnanimous audacity
Confess at once each machination dire,
Worthy of one in treason so accomplish'd!
*Car.* What have I to confess? My father, spare me
These useless outrages. Choose at thy will
What torture suits thee best: if thee it please,
I question not its justice.
*Phi.* By what means,
At such an unripe age, hast thou attain'd
To this perfection of atrocity?
How hast thou so consummately acquired
The art of wickedness, that, by thy king
Caught in this monstrous crime, thou wear'st the mien
Of innocence?
*Car.* Where did I learn it, father?
Born in thy palace . . .
*Phi.* Villain, thou wert born there
To my disgrace and shame . . .
*Car.* Why then delay
That shame to wipe away? make thyself happy
By shedding now the life-blood of thy son.
*Phi.* My son art thou?
*Car.* But what have I then done?
*Phi.* Ask'st thou that question? ask'st thou it of me?
Does no compunction agonize thy heart? . . .
Ah, no! Thou long, long since of such a weakness
Hast got clear riddance; 'tis a pang thou know'st not;
Except it be because in thought alone,
And not in act, thou art a parricide.
*Car.* A parricide! a parricide! What hear I?
Thyself dost not believe it.—What suspicion,
What probability, what proof, hast thou? . . .
*Phi.* Proof, probability, and certainty,
Thy contumelious aspect yields them all.
*Car.* —O father, father, do not drive me on
Those holiest of all bounds to violate,
Which Heav'n, and nature, and the laws have placed
Between a king and subject, son and father.
*Phi.* Thy sacrilegious character long since
Has pass'd those bounds. What do I say? those bounds
Were never binding on thy froward nature.
Use not, for ill they suit thee, any longer

The pompous phrases of a high-soul'd virtue:
At once confess to me thy many plots
Projected and accomplish'd . . . Speak, what fear'st thou?
That I less noble am, than thou art vile?
If thou wilt speak the truth, the whole truth, hope;
If thou dissemblest, or art silent, fear.
*Car.* I speak the truth; 'tis thou compell'st me to it.—
I know myself too well, to have to fear;
And thee too well I know, to ever hope.
A luckless gift, take thou my life, for thine
It is to take; my honor is my own,
Thou gav'st it not, nor canst thou take it from me.
Guilty I should be, could I stoop to own
A guilt to which my nature is a stranger.—
Thou here shalt see me breathe my last; a death
Ling'ring, opprobrious, full of agonies,
Do thou prepare: death, in its direst shape,
Cannot degrade me, cannot make me tremble.
Thee, thee alone, I pity, not myself.
*Phi.* Presumptuous youth! and dar'st thou to thy king
Thus give account of thy misdeeds?
*Car.* Account?—
Thou hatest me, behold my sole misdeed:
Thirstest to have my blood, behold my crime:
Thou'rt absolute, this constitutes thy right.
*Phi.* Ho, guards! arrest him straightway!
*Car.* The reply
Is this of tyrant kings. Behold, my arm,
I yield it to the fetters: here's my breast,
I bare it to thy sword. Dost hesitate?
Hast only learn'd to-day to play the tyrant?
Day after day thy reign is register'd
In characters indelible of blood . . .
*Phi.* Guards, drag him from my presence; and confine him
In yon adjacent tower's profoundest dungeon.
Death to the slave that listens to his pleadings.
*Car.* Thou need'st not fear; thy minions emulate
In cruelty their king.
*Phi.* Drag him by force
From out my sight; yes, drag him by main force . . .

## Scene III.

ISABELLA, PHILIP.

*Isa.* O Heav'ns! what do I see? . . .
*Phi.* What ails thee, madam?
*Isa.* Throughout the palace mournful cries resound . . .
*Phi.* Perchance, thou heard'st a painful sound . . .
*Isa.* Alas!
Did not I see the prince dragg'd from thy presence?
*Phi.* Thine eyes deceived thee not; 'twas he.
*Isa.* Thy son? . . .
*Phi.* Does my wife tremble and wax pale to see it? . . .
*Isa.* I tremble?
*Phi.* And 'tis not without a cause.—
Thy trembling . . . is . . . to me . . . no light assurance . . .
Of thy true love . . . Thou tremblest for . . . thy husband.
But reassure thy heart; the peril's vanish'd.
*Isa.* Peril? . . . and how?
*Phi.* Peril most imminent:
But now my life is in security . . .
*Isa.* Thy life? . . .
*Phi.* To thee so dear, and so essential,
Is safe.
*Isa.* The traitor? . . .
*Phi.* Shall have punishment
Due to his treason. To a foolish pity
Think not that I again shall yield my heart.
That time is past; and now I hear alone
The terrible and warning voice of justice.
*Isa.* What is the plot?
*Phi.* O Heav'ns! p'rhaps I alone
Was not its object. He who thirsts to shed
The life-blood of a father (if he hate
His father's wife, as much as he hates him),
Would little scruple his step-mother's blood
Also to shed . . .
*Isa.* My blood? . . . What dost thou mean? . . .
Alas! . . . The prince . . .
*Phi.* Ungrateful that he is,
Forgets no less thy benefits than mine.—

But be thyself again; live happily; . . .
And leave to me alone the weighty trust
Of making both thy peace and mine secure.

## SCENE IV.

ISABELLA.

*Isa.* What accents! . . . what an aspect! . . . I am palsied,
And scarce can tell or where or what I am.
What did he say? what did he not say? ah!
Has he my love detected? . . . no, no; that
Yet in the inmost chambers of my breast
In safety lies . . . Yet, what a piercing look,
Flashing with indignation, fix'd he on me! . . .
Alas! . . . he afterwards did speak to me
Of step-mother . . . what said he of my peace? . . .
What said I in reply? Named I the prince?
O what cold horror shoots through all my veins!
Where is he gone? . . . and what does he project?
Meanwhile what should I do?—I now will try
To follow him: . . . but foot and strength both fail me . . .

## SCENE V.

GOMEZ, ISABELLA.

*Gom.* Pardon my too great boldness; but I sought,
And here expected to have found, the king.
*Isa.* . . . He quitted me this instant.
*Gom.* I'm compell'd
To seek him, then, elsewhere. Undoubtedly
He feels impatient the event to know . . .
*Isa.* Event? . . . a moment stay: say what thou meanest . . .
*Gom.* If thou hast spoken to him, he has told thee
His doubtful expectation of the sentence
About to be pronounced . . .
*Isa.* No: but to me,
He, in obscure and most ambiguous terms,
Of treason spoke . . .
*Gom.* Did he not tell thee, then,
The traitor's name?

*Isa.* The prince . . .
*Gom.* Thou know'st it all.
I from the council come . . .
*Isa.* What council? whence?
Alas! what tidings dost thou bring to him?
*Gom.* The mighty matter was discuss'd at length,
And with one voice at length it was concluded . . .
*Isa.* What? Speak!
*Gom.* 'Tis written in this scroll—the sentence.
The royal signature alone is wanting.
*Isa.* The tenor of it, then? . . .
*Gom.* Is death.
*Isa.* Assassins!
Death? and of what offence is he convicted?
*Gom.* Did, then, the king conceal it from thee?
*Isa.* Yes.
He spoke it not.
*Gom.* The crime is parricide.
*Isa.* Carlos! O Heav'ns! . . .
*Gom.* The father is the' accuser.
*Isa.* The father? . . . and what proofs can he adduce? . . .
False proofs.—Ah, surely, there are other reasons
From me conceal'd. Tell me his real trespass.
*Gom.* His real trespass?—If thou dost not know it,
Can I reveal it to thee? . . . Such incaution
Might cost my life.
*Isa.* Alas! what dost thou say?
Art apprehensive that I shall betray thee?
*Gom.* Further disclosure would betray the king.—
But whence arises such an anxious wish
In thee to know the truth?
*Isa.* I? . . . I am urged
By curiosity alone.
*Gom.* But tell me,
What int'rest canst thou have in this transaction?—
In greatest danger is the prince, and maybe
Will fall a victim to it. But to him
What tie, save that of father's wife, can bind thee? . . .
Thou would'st not be affected by his death.
Rather to children who from thee may spring,
It clears the passage to the throne. Believe me:

In part, at least, of Carlos's transgressions,
The first, and real origin, is love . . .
*Isa.* What say'st?
*Gom.* That love, with which the king beholds thee.
Yes, it would please him far more to behold
A son of thine inheriting his throne,
Than e'er to see in Carlos his successor.
*Isa.* I breathe again.—What base regards in me
Presum'st thou to imagine?
*Gom.* I presume
The feelings of my monarch to express;
They are not, no, such are not mine; but I . . .
*Isa.* 'Tis true, then, that which I could ne'er suspect;
The father . . . yes, the father hates his son . . .
*Gom.* O madam, how much do I pity thee,
If thou hast, hitherto, so little known
The king!
*Isa.* But, ah! in whom, then, may I trust?
Thou p'rhaps . . .
*Gom.* Since pity I behold in thee,
That darksome silence which oppresses me
For once I lay aside. 'Tis too, too true,
The prince is guilty of no other crime
But that of being son of such a father.
*Isa.* Thou mak'st me shudder.
*Gom.* I am stricken, madam,
With no less horror than thyself. Dost know
Whence this unnatural hate derives its source?
From envy: Philip's simulated virtue
Cannot endure the painful spectacle
Of undissembled virtue in a son.
Too great a contrast to himself he sees him;
And, impious in his envy, he prefers
To that superiority his death.
*Isa.* O cruel father! but, why doth the council,
More wicked than the king himself, condemn
A guiltless man to death?
*Gom.* To such a king
What council could oppose itself? The' accuser
Sits on the throne: the accusation's false:
Each knows this; but each, trembling for himself,

Silent in mercy's cause, affirms its truth;
On us the blot of guilty judgment falls;
Vile instruments of cruelty in power;
We shudder, but in vain: whoe'er opposed him
Would quickly fall a victim to his vengeance.
*Isa.* Can that be truth which now I hear?...struck dumb
Am I with blank astonishment . . . No hope
Doth there remain? Must he unjustly perish?
*Gom.* The monarch in profound dissimulation
More than in aught is skill'd. He will affect
To hesitate at first; a vain display
Of pity and of grief will doubtless make,
P'rhaps for a time procrastinate decision.
Fool will he be, that, in that well-feign'd struggle,
Believes that real grief or pity enters;
That in that heart, because it may delay,
Profound resentment swerves from its fix'd purpose.
*Isa.* Ah! if thou hast not equally with him
Thy soul by crimes made hard, do thou, I pray,
Ah, do thou, Gomez, be compassionate . . .
*Gom.* What can I do?
*Isa.* Perchance . . .
*Gom.* With fruitless tears,
But carefully conceal'd, I may embalm
The mem'ry of that murder'd guiltless one:
But more I cannot do.
*Isa.* Of such dire guilt,
Who ever saw, who ever heard, a deed?
*Gom.* If it were possible to save the prince,
Prompt would I be to sacrifice myself;
To this bear witness, Heav'n: With fell remorse
In all its bitterness, the consequence
Of fatal friendship with so dark a tyrant,
My bosom with excruciating pangs
Is gnaw'd; but . . .
*Isa.* If it be sincere in thee,
This deep remorse, thou may'st befriend him still;
Yes, thou may'st do it, and not risk thyself.
The king suspects thee not; thou may'st afford him
Means of escape clandestinely: and who
Would e'er discover thee?—Nay, who can tell

But that in future moments of compunction,
Philip the gen'rous boldness may reward
Of him who saved his glory and his son.
*Gom.* And if, perchance, I dared do this, think'st thou
That Carlos would consent? How proud he is,
Thou know'st. Already I foresee his rage,
In hearing only the mere name of flight
And sentence. Ah! each message of his death
That haughty and unconquerable nature
Would seek in vain to terrify. E'en now
I see him obstinately bent on dying.
Further, all counsel and all aid from me
Would be at once suspicious and offensive.
He deems me as the monarch's counterpart.
*Isa.* Is there no other obstacle? Contrive
For me to see him; to his prison guide me:
Thou surely hast access; I fondly hope
For his consent to fly. Refuse me not
A favour so immense. As yet the night
Is not far spent. Meanwhile do thou the means
For his escape prepare; do thou delay
The presentation of the fatal sentence,
Which, p'rhaps, the king doth not expect so soon.
Thou hearest . . . Do not disappoint my prayers;
In such a cause the Heav'ns will be propitious:
I do conjure thee to exert thyself . . .
*Gom.* Who could refuse so merciful an office?
At any cost the effort will I make.
Let's go, then.—Heav'n will never suffer those
To perish who are not deserving death.

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## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

CARLOS.

*Car.* What have I now to hope, what fear, but death?
Would I might have it free from infamy! . . .
From cruel Philip, I, alas, shall have it

Replete with infamy.—One doubt alone,
Far worse than any death, afflicts my heart.
Perchance he knows my love: Erewhile I saw,
In the fierce glances of his countenance,
I know not what of bitterness, that seem'd,
Spite of himself, his meaning to betray . . .
His conversation with the queen erewhile . . .
My summons; his observing me . . . What would . . .
(O Heav'ns!) what would her fate be, should his wife
Excite the wrath of his suspicious nature?
Perchance e'en now the cruel tyrant wreaks
Vengeance on her for an uncertain fault;
Vengeance that always, when a tyrant rules,
Precedes the crime itself . . . But, if to all,
And almost to ourselves, our love's unknown,
Whence should he learn it? . . . Have my sighs perchance
Betray'd my meaning? What? Shall love's soft sighs
Be by a guilty tyrant understood? . . .
To make him furious and unnatural,
Could it be needful to a sire like this
To penetrate my love? His vengeful hate
Had reach'd its height, and could not brook delay.
The day at length is come, the day is come
When I may satisfy his thirst for blood.—
Ah! treach'rous troops of friends that crowded round me
In my prosperity! where are ye now?
I only ask of you a sword; a sword,
By means of which to 'scape from infamy,
Not one of you will bring me . . . whence that noise? . . .
The iron gate grates on its hinges! Ah!
What next may I expect? . . . Who comes there? Ho!

## Scene II.

ISABELLA, CARLOS.

*Car.* Queen, is it thou? Who was thy guide? What cause
Hither conducted thee? Love, duty, pity?
How didst thou gain admission?
*Isa.* Wretched prince,
Thou know'st not yet the horrors of thy fate:

Thou as a parricide art stigmatized;
Thy sire himself accuses thee; to death
A mercenary council hath condemn'd thee;
Nothing is wanting to complete the sentence
But the assent of Philip.
*Car.* If that's all,
That soon will follow.
*Isa.* Art thou not o'erwhelm'd?
*Car.* 'Tis long since nought but death has been my choice:
Thou know'st it well, of whom I nothing ask'd,
But leave to breathe my last where thou dost dwell.
'Tis hard, yes, hard, the horrible aspersion;
Not unexpected. I'm compell'd to die:
And can I shudder if thou bring the tidings?
*Isa.* Ah! if thou love me, do not talk of death.
Yield, for a short time, to the pressing need . . .
*Car.* Yield? now I see that thou hast undertaken
The cruel office to degrade my nature.
My vengeful father hath deputed thee . . .
*Isa.* And canst thou think it, prince, that I am then
The minister of Philip's cruelty? . . .
*Car.* He may to this constrain thee, p'rhaps deceive thee.
But wherefore, then, has he permitted thee
To see me in this dungeon?
*Isa.* Thinkest thou
That Philip knows it? That indeed were death! . . .
*Car.* What say'st thou? Nothing can escape his knowledge.
Who dares to violate his fierce commands? . . .
*Isa.* Gomez.
*Car.* Alas! what is it that I hear?
What an abominable, fatal name
Hast thou pronounced! . . .
*Isa.* He's not thy enemy,
As thou dost think . . .
*Car.* O Heav'ns, if I believed
He were my friend, my countenance would burn
With shame, more than with anger.
*Isa.* He alone

Feels pity for thy fate. To me confess'd he
Philip's atrocious plot.
*Car.* Incautious queen!
Thou art too credulous! what hast thou done?
Why didst thou trust to such a feign'd compassion?
Of the base king the basest minister,
If he spoke truth, 'twas with the truth to cheat thee.
*Isa.* What could it profit him? Of his compassion
Undoubted proofs I quickly can display,
If thou wilt yield to my entreaties. He
By stealth conducted me to this recess;
Prepares the means of thy escape: 'twas I
That influenced him. No longer tarry; fly!
Fly from thy father, fly from death and me!
*Car.* While thou hast time, ah, hasten from my presence;
Gomez no pity feign'd without good reason.
Into what snare thou'rt fallen! Now, O queen,
Indeed I shudder! Now, what doubt remains?
The secret of our love is fully known
By Philip now . . .
*Isa.* Ah, no! Not long ago
Philip I saw, when, from his presence, thou,
By dint of force, wert dragg'd: he burn'd with rage:
Trembling I listen'd to him, not exempt
From fears like thine. But when in solitude
His converse I recall'd, I felt secure,
That, rather than of this, his fury tax'd thee
With ev'ry other crime . . . I now remember,
He charged thee with intriguing 'gainst my life,
As well as 'gainst his own.
*Car.* 'Twould be a toil
That made me vile as he, yea, e'en more vile,
The dark perplexities to penetrate
Of guilt's inextricable labyrinth;
But, sure I am, that this thy embassy
Conceals some bad design: that which till now
He but suspected, he would now make clear.
But, be it what it may, depart at once
From this disastrous place. Thy hope is vain,
Vain thy belief that Gomez wills to serve me,
Or, if he will'd it, that I should consent.

*Isa.* And must I, then, drag on my wretched days
Midst beings such as these?
*Car.* 'Tis too, too true! —
Delay not now a moment: leave me; save me
From agonies insufferably keen . . .
Thy pity wounds, if for thyself it feels not.
Go, if thou hold life dear . . .
*Isa.* Life dear to me? . . .
*Car.* My honor, then, remember, and thy fame.
*Isa.* And in such danger must I quit thee thus?
*Car.* Ah, what avails it to expose thyself?
Thyself thou ruinest, and sav'st not me.
Virtue is spotted even by suspicion.
Ah! from the tyrant snatch the hellish joy
Of casting imputation on thy name.
Go: dry thy tears; and still thy heaving bosom.
With a dry eye, and an intrepid brow,
Hear of my death. To virtue's cause devote
The mournful days in which thou shalt outlive me . . .
And if among so many guilty creatures
Thou seekest consolation, one remains:
Perez, thou know'st him well, clandestinely
Will weep with thee; — To him sometimes speak of me . . .
But go—depart; . . . Ah, tempt me not to weep . . .
Little by little rend not thus my heart!
Take now thy last farewell, . . . and leave me; . . . go!
I've need to summon all my fortitude,
Now that the fatal hour of death approaches . . .

## Scene III.

PHILIP, ISABELLA, CARLOS.

*Phi.* Perfidious one, that hour of death is come:
I bring it to thee.
*Isa.* Are we thus betray'd? . . .
*Car.* I am prepared for death. Give it at once.
*Phi.* Wretch, thou shalt die: but first, ye impious pair,
My fulminating accents hear, and tremble.—
Ye vile ones! long, yes, long, I've known it all.
That horrid flame that burns in you with love,

In me with fury, long has fix'd its torment,
And long been all discover'd. O what pangs
Of rage repress'd! O what resentment smother'd!...
At last ye both are fallen in my power.
Should I lament? or utter vain regrets?
I vow'd revenge; and I will have it soon;
Revenge full, unexampled.—On your shame
Meanwhile I feast my eyes. Flagitious woman,
Think not I ever bore thee any love,
Nor that a jealous thought within my heart
E'er woke a pang. Philip could never deign
On a degraded bosom, such as thine,
To fix the love of his exalted nature;
Nor could a woman who deserved betray it.
Thou hast in me thy king offended, then,
And not thy lover. Thou, unworthily,
Hast now my consort's name, that sacred name,
Basely contaminated. I ne'er prized
Thy love; but such inviolable duty
Thou should'st have felt towards thy lord and king,
As should have made thee e'en at a frail thought
Shudder with horror.—Thou, seducer vile;...
To thee I speak not. Guilt becomes thy nature:
The deed was worthy of its impious author.—
Undoubted proofs to me (too much so!) were,
Although conceal'd, your guilty sighs, your silence,
Your gestures, and the sorrow which I saw,
And still can see, your wicked bosoms filling
With equal force.—Now, what more shall I say?
Equal in crime, your torments shall be equal.

*Car.* What do I hear? In her there is no fault:
No fault? not e'en the shadow of a fault!
Pure is her heart; with such flagitious flame
It never burn'd, I swear: she scarcely knew
My love; the trespass then...

*Phi.* To what extent
Ye, each of you, are criminal, I know;
I know that to thy father's bed, as yet,
Thou hast not raised thy bold and impious thoughts.
Had it been otherwise, would'st thou now live?...
But from thy impure mouth there issued accents,

Flagitious accents, of a dreadful love;
She heard them; that suffices.
*Car.* I alone
Offended thee; I seek not to conceal it:
A rapid flash of hope athwart my sight
Shot: but her virtue instantly dispell'd it:
She heard me, but 'twas only to my shame;
Only to root entirely from my bosom
The passion illegitimate it foster'd . . .
Yes, now, alas! too illegitimate . . .
Yet it was once a lawful, noble passion:
She was my spouse betroth'd—my spouse, thou know'st;
Thou gav'st her to me; and the gift was lawful,
But 'twas not lawful in thee to resume it . . .
Yes, I am criminal in ev'ry shape:
I love her; thou hast made that love a crime: . . .
What canst thou now take from me? In my blood
Satiate thy wrath; and gratify in me
The bitter madness of thy jealous pride;
Spare her; for she is wholly innocent . . .
*Phi.* She? Not to thee in guilt she yields, but boldness.—
Be silent, madam, of thine own accord.
That silence doth sufficiently betray thee:
'Tis useless to deny it, thou dost cherish
A passion illegitimate. Thou show'dst it,
Enough, too much didst show it, when I spoke,
With artful purposes, of him to thee:
Why, then, didst thou so pertinaciously
Remind me that he was my son? O traitress,
Thou didst not dare to say he was thy lover.
And hast thou less than he, within thy heart,
Betray'd thy duty, honor, and the laws?
*Isa.* . . . My silence from my fear doth not arise;
But from the stupor that benumbs my senses,
At the incredible duplicity
Of thy bloodthirsty, rabid heart.—At length
My scatter'd senses I once more recover . . .
'Tis time, 'tis time, that for the heinous fault
I should atone, of being wife to thee.—
Till now I've not offended thee: till now,

In God's sight, in the prince's, I am guiltless.
Although within my breast . . .
*Car.* Pity for me
Inspires her words: ah, hear her not . . .
*Isa.* In vain
Thou seek'st to save me. Ev'ry word of thine
Is as a puncture, which exasperates
The wounds of his proud breast. The time is past
For palliatives. To shun his hated sight,
The torment of whose presence nought can equal,
Is now my only refuge. —Were it given
To one that is a tyrant e'er to feel
The pow'r of love, I would remind thee, king,
That thou at first didst form our mutual ties:
That, from my earliest years, my fondest thoughts,
My dearest hopes, were centred all in him;
With him I trusted to live bless'd and blessing.
To love him then, at once, in me was virtue,
And to thy will submission. Who but thou
Made what was virtue guilt? Thou didst the deed.
Ties the most holy thou didst burst asunder,—
An easy task to one that's absolute.
But does the heart change thus? His image lay
Deeply engraven there: but instantly
That I became thy wife, the flame was smother'd.
And I depended afterwards on time,
And on my virtue, and, perchance, on thee,
Wholly to root it out . . .
*Phi.* I will then now,
What neither years, nor virtue, have perform'd,
Do instantly: yes, in thy faithless blood
I'll quench the impure flame . . .
*Isa.* Yes, blood to spill,
And, when that blood is spilt, to spill more blood,
Is thy most choice prerogative: but, O!
Is it by a prerogative like this
Thou hopest to win me from him to thee?
To thee, as utterly unlike thy son,
As is, to virtue, vice?—Thou hast been wont
To see me tremble; but I fear no more;
As yet, my wicked passion, for as such

I deem'd my passion, I have kept conceal'd:
Now shall it be without disguise proclaim'd,
Since thy dark crimes have made it seem like virtue.
*Phi.* He's worthy of thee; thou of him art worthy.—
It now remains to prove, if, as in words,
Ye will be bold in death...

## SCENE IV.

GOMEZ, PHILIP, ISABELLA, CARLOS.

*Phi.* Hast thou, O Gomez,
All my commands fulfill'd? What I enjoin'd thee
Dost thou now bring?
*Gom.* Perez has breath'd his last:
Behold the sword, that with his smoking blood
Yet reeks.
*Car.* O sight!
*Phi.* With him is not extinguish'd
The race of traitors... Be thou witness now
How I take vengeance on this impious pair.
*Car.* Before I die, alas! how many deaths
I'm destined to behold. Thou, Perez, too?...
O infamy! now, now I follow thee.
Where is the sword to which my breast is fated?
Quick, bring it to me. May my blood alone
The burning thirst of this fell tiger slake!
*Isa.* O would that I alone could satisfy
His murd'rous appetite!
*Phi.* Cease your vile contest.
This dagger, and this cup, await your choice.
Thou, proud contemner as thou art, of death,
Choose first.
*Car.* O weapon of deliverance!...
With guiltless blood yet reeking, thee I choose!—
O luckless lady, thou hast said too much:
For thee no refuge now remains but death:
But, ah! the poison choose, for this will be
Most easy... Of my inauspicious love
The last advice is this: collect at once

All, all thy fortitude:—and look on me . . .[1]
I die . . . do thou now follow my example . . .—
Bring, bring the fatal cup . . . do not delay . . .
*Isa.* Ah, yes; I follow thee. O Death, to me
Thou art most welcome; in thee . . .
*Phi.* Thou shalt live;
Spite of thyself, shalt live.
*Isa.* Ah, let me . . . O
Fierce torture! see, he dies: and I?
*Phi.* Yes, thou,
Sever'd from him, shalt live; live days of woe:
Thy ling'ring grief will be a joy to me.
And when at last, recover'd from thy love,
Thou wishest to live on, I, then, will kill thee.
*Isa.* Live in thy presence? . . . I support thy sight? . . .
No, that shall never be . . . My doom is fix'd . . .
The cup refused . . . thy dagger may replace it.[2]
*Phi.* Stop.
*Isa.* Now I die . . .
*Phi.* Heav'ns, what do I behold?
*Isa.* Thou see'st thy wife . . . thy son . . . both innocent . . .
And both by thy hands slain . . . — I follow thee,
Loved Carlos . . .
*Phi.* What a stream of blood runs here,
And of what blood! . . . Behold, I have at least
Obtain'd an ample, and a horrid vengeance . . .
But, am I happy? . . . —Gomez, do thou hide
The dire catastrophe from all the world.—
By silence, thou wilt save my fame, thy life.

[1] He stabs himself.

[2] She darts most rapidly towards the dagger of Philip, and stabs herself with it.

II.

# POLYNICES.

## THE ARGUMENT.

POLYNICES and Eteocles were the sons of Œdipus, king of Thebes, by Jocasta his own mother, whom he unwittingly married. On discovering his dreadful mistake, he went mad, and tore out his own eyes. His two sons jointly succeeded him on the throne, but agreed to reign alternately for a year at a time. Polynices faithfully observed the arrangement, and at the expiration of his year resigned the throne to Eteocles. The latter, however, refused to carry out his share of the agreement, and declined to readmit Polynices to the throne when his own twelve months had come to an end. At the commencement of the play, Polynices (who in the meantime had married the daughter of Adrastus, king of Argos) is approaching the walls of Thebes at the head of the Argive army, in order to recover his patrimony by their aid.

Jocasta and Antigone, her daughter, lament the coming conflict between the brothers. The latter shows plainly that she considers Polynices (as he indeed is) the more worthy of the two. Eteocles appears, and endeavors to enlist his mother in his cause by dwelling on the sacrilegious invasion by Polynices of the Theban territory, with his foreign hordes; and Creon, Jocasta's brother, who pretends to be devoted to the cause of Eteocles, undertakes to secure his triumph by stratagem, but all the while contemplates obtaining the throne for himself.

The brothers at length meet in the presence of their mother. After a bitter quarrel between them, Eteocles pretends to yield to Jocasta's entreaties, and undertakes

to resign in favor of Polynices, if he will first withdraw the hostile troops. Creon reappears when Polynices is alone, and artfully strives to inflame his fury against his brother. On rejoining Eteocles, Creon uses similar irritating language, and works him up to the highest pitch of hatred. Antigone warns Polynices against placing any trust in Creon.

At length Eteocles proposes that his brother and he should take solemn oaths to observe in future the rule of reigning alternately, and asks Polynices to drink the sacred cup first, in pledge of the oath. The latter refuses, and proclaims (Creon having given him information to that effect) that the cup is poisoned. Eteocles denies it, but refuses to taste it himself, and also prevents Jocasta from doing so by dashing it to the ground.

Finally, the brothers engage in mortal combat, in the presence of the assembled armies; and Polynices, though much against his own will, inflicts a fatal wound on Eteocles, who has just strength enough, before he dies, to stab his brother to death in the presence of Jocasta and Antigone. Eteocles dies, repeating his hatred of Polynices. The latter also expires, pardoning Eteocles.

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The peculiarity of this play (originally called *The Hostile Brothers*, and written by Alfieri in French prose, like *Philip*) is that the element of love is entirely absent from it. The austerity of Alfieri's style appears to advantage in this and his other tragedies founded on classical models or classical legends and histories. The present play is based upon Æschylus's *Seven against Thebes*. The scenes between Jocasta and her sons, and also that of the attempted poisoning of Polynices by his brother, are much admired. Alfieri himself preferred this tragedy to *Philip*, and describes it as based on "the thirst for power, mingled with a fatal hatred inspired by the gods in the hearts of the two brothers, as a punishment for their father's incestuous marriage, and leading to a most terrible catastrophe." (*Parere dell' Autore su le presenti Tragedie.*) Racine's *Thébaïde* or *Les Frères Ennemis* is founded on the same story, and contains all the characters that appear in Alfieri's tragedy.

# POLYNICES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| ETEOCLES. | CREON. |
| JOCASTA. | *Guards of Eteocles.* |
| POLYNICES. | *Priests.* |
| ANTIGONE. | *People.* |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Thebes.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE.

*Joc.* Thou only now of my unhappy offspring,
Antigone, thou only now dost bring
Some consolation to my mortal grief:
Yet, notwithstanding, thou dost owe thy life
To my incestuous crime; thy qualities
Would make one doubt the horrors of thy birth.
Mother of Œdipus, his wife as well,
The name of parent only makes me shudder:
Yet, when thou call'st me by the name of mother,
There is, I know not what, that soothes my soul . . .
O that I dared to call my sons thy brethren!
O that I dared my guilty voice to raise
To the immortal gods! I would implore
That they on my devoted head alone
Would hurl the shafts of their unerring vengeance.
*Ant.* Alas! the gods have ceased to pity us;
The gods themselves abhor us. Œdipus

Is now a name that of itself suffices
To blast our fated race; we were defiled,
Tainted with guilt, ere yet we saw the light;
Were reprobated long before our birth . . .
Mother, why weep'st thou now? When we were born,
Thou rather should'st have wept. Unhappy one!
Thou saw'st not what the future should bring forth:
Brethren at once, and sons, Eteocles
And Polynices, yet have scarcely given
Proofs of their characters . . .

*Joc.* True, to their father
They hitherto have shown but little pity;
And bear a bitter hatred tow'rds each other.
'Gainst their flagitious mother, why have they,
With better reason, not turn'd all their rage?
Inadequate to my enormous guilt,
No other punishment have I to bear
Than feelings of remorse. I fill the throne,
The genial light of Heav'n these eyes behold,
While Œdipus, unfortunate, yet guiltless,
Deprived of sight, and cover'd with disgrace,
Neglected lies; and e'en his very sons
Abandon him. By their means is he thus
Constrain'd to shudder with a double horror,
That he of his own brethren is the father.

*Ant.* Thou, then, dost think thy sufferings are light
Compared with those of Œdipus: though he,
From grisly caverns, mad with grief and rage,
A thousand times a day entreat for death;
Although his sight be gone, for ever gone,
Quench'd in an everlasting night of tears;
Yet less than thee do I account him wretched.
He will know nothing of the spectacle,
That in this realm will be too soon display'd;
Or, if he know, he will not, as thou wilt,
With his paternal eyes behold the' impure,
The impious, and the reprobated remnant
Of your devoted race, destroy each other.
Between the brethren hate is at its height;
And 'twould be difficult to say, if thirst
For blood or pow'r most fiercely fills their hearts.

*Joc.* I see it... I?... the brethren fight?... O Heavens,
I hope to see it never. I alone
Am thus enabled to support my life,
By the desire which in my breast I feel,
The warm desire, and the aspiring hope,
To stifle with my tears, that which, alas!
'Twixt my exasperated sons now burns,
The fatal flame of discord...
*Ant.* Dost thou hope it?...
O mother! one the sceptre is, and two
Are the competitors: what canst thou hope?
*Joc.* That the alternate oath will be observed.
*Ant.* That oath both swore; but one alone has kept it;
He from the throne is banish'd. Swoll'n with pride,
Perjured Eteocles now fills that throne;
And reaps the harvest of his breach of faith.
But Polynices; forced from foreign states
Assistance to solicit, to his wrath
Will set no bounds, if he the sceptre gain not;
And will Eteocles to force concede
That sceptre, which, by force, he may retain?
*Joc.* And am I no one? To my mediation
Will not their fury yield? Ah, rob me not
Of my last hope!—Although, as fame reports,
The Argive king advances with his troops
To aid the cause of exiled Polynices,
And to reclaim his violated rights;
And though Eteocles, inflamed with pride,
Still obstinately keeps the Theban throne;
Yet in my tears, and in my indignation,
And in the anguish of a mother's bosom,
There is a pow'r to bring them both to reason.
My loud reproach Eteocles shall hear
For broken faith, and violated oaths;
And Polynices, too, shall be reminded
That the same Thebes which he would now assault
Witness'd his birth, and was his infant home...
What more? If they compel me, they shall hear me
Asseverate the' opprobrium of their birth;
And ere their impious swords attack each other,
Those swords shall find a passage through my breast.

*Ant.* At present, could I hope, my hopes would centre
Upon the one that's banish'd from the throne:
His was the milder nature; nor his heart
Can by long exile be so much depraved,
As is his brother's by long use of power . . .
*Joc.* Thou think'st most highly of the exiled brother?
Yet has Eteocles, as he has done,
The bounds of filial duty not transgress'd:
Without my leave not form'd a strange alliance;
Nor had recourse to enemies of Thebes . . .
*Ant.* He has not had, O mother, to endure
Long exile, perilous adversity,
And broken compacts. Soon, too soon, O mother!
Whose is the better nature, thou shalt see.

## Scene II.

ETEOCLES, JOCASTA, ANTIGONE.

*Ete.* Behold, at last that Polynices comes;
He comes, who first usurp'd so cruelly
A mother's partial, fond solicitude.
Not as he went from Thebes shalt thou behold him,
Alone, an exile, and a wanderer;
Not as he saw me on that day return,
To claim from him the covenanted throne:
To us returns he with a proud array
Of pow'rful enemies: in arms he seeks
From his own brother the ancestral throne:
Anxious and ready he displays himself
To burn to ashes these paternal walls,
These sacred temples, and these household gods,
This palace, in which, first, the breath of life,
An infant, he inhaled; this, that contains
His father, and his mother, and his brethren,
And all that he should hold most dear and sacred.—
He hath thus sacrilegiously referr'd
All law, all hope, all reason, to the sword.
*Joc.* Then true is the report? O Heav'ns! in arms
To his paternal soil . . .
*Ete.* He has forsworn
The Theban name; he has become an Argive:
To him his daughter hath Adrastus given,

And he will give him Thebes. From yon high tower,
If thou'rt disposed to see it, go, and witness
How he hath trodden down his native soil:
Thou wilt from thence, e'en on our lands, behold
Thy own son's banners floating on the breeze,
And, with arm'd strangers, see the outstretch'd plain,
As by a bursting torrent, overwhelm'd.

*Joc.* Have I not often told thee so? To this
By dint of force thou drov'st him.

*Ete.* Of my brother
The first assailant thou shalt not behold me:
I only shall secure the walls of Thebes.

*Ant.* He quarrels not with Thebes. He seeks alone
To gain by arms a throne to prayers denied.

*Ete.* Commands they were, not prayers; and such opprobrious,
Unjust commands, that I would not obey them.
And I in fact, not given to obedience,
Possess the throne. Since he will have it so,
Himself absolves me from the plighted faith:
The tie abominable form'd by him
With Thebes' great enemies, has, of itself,
All antecedent covenants dissolved.

*Joc.* He is my son, my son in spite of all;
Such I esteem him: and moreover hope
To make him yet esteem thee as a brother.
I'll be the first his fury to confront,
And meet him on the plain; do thou remain...

## Scene III.

CREON, ETEOCLES, JOCASTA, ANTIGONE.

*Cre.* Whither, O sister, dost thou bend thy steps?
The paths are intercepted; and the gates
Of Thebes are closed against the Argive swords;
The walls with armèd men on ev'ry side
Encompass'd: horrid sight!—Before the rest,
A bow-shot from the troops, comes Polynices
Towards the city gates, all unattended:
The vizor of his helmet raised, he spreads
Tow'rds us one hand unarm'd; and with the other

Bends tow'rds the earth the point of his drawn sword.
With gesture such as this, audaciously
Admission for himself, and not for others,
Within the walls of Thebes he challenges:
Invokes his mother's name, and makes profession
Of an impatient wish to ask her blessing.
*Ete.* This is a new wish, truly! . . . sword in hand,
To seek the' embrace of an offended mother.
*Joc.* But didst thou not, O Creon, first exhort him
His arms to lay aside? My inmost mind
Is known to thee; full well thou art assured
I could not see, much less embrace a son,
Who comes with sword in hand to brave his brother.
*Cre.* His words breathe nothing but respect and peace;
Nor do his troops with military license
Run through our fields: from the resounding bow
The barbèd arrow has not hiss'd through air;
Nor has an Argive weapon tasted yet
A drop of Theban blood. On their swords' hilts
Their right hands rest immoveable; each warrior
Is sway'd by Polynices; thou might'st hear
A mingled murmur through the camp, which cries:
"Peace to the Thebans, and to Thebes."
*Ete.* Indeed!
This most assuredly will be to you
An honorable peace. Does then my brother
'Gainst me alone this enterprise prepare?
'Tis well: and I alone accept the challenge.
*Ant.* But, notwithstanding, if he speaks of peace?. . .
Let us first hear him . . .
*Joc.* Let him be admitted
Alone within the gates; I will speak with him;
Nor canst thou interdict it.
*Cre.* If he brings
No treach'rous influence with him into Thebes.
*Ant.* Ah! never has he known what treach'ry is.
*Ete.* Truly thou know'st him well—It seems to me
That thou'rt acquainted with his inmost mind;
P'rhaps you concur in thoughts as well as words . . .
*Joc.* Alas! my son, how in these bitter accents
Thy malice ill-disguised breaks forth! . . . To Thebes,

Ah, let him come, and come to my embrace;
There lay his weapons down.—Let us, my daughter,
Go to the temple now, imploring peace . . .
And did he ask for me? Belovèd son,
'Tis a long time since I beheld thee last! . . .
Perchance, in me alone, in my immense,
Impartial, and maternal love, has he,
E'en more than in his troops, reposed his hopes.
He is indeed my son; he is thy brother:
Betwixt you I alone am arbitress.
For a few moments banish from thy mind
The thoughts of how he has return'd to Thebes;
Remember only how he went from thence;
How many years, in spite of thy pledged faith,
Through Greece he wander'd: contemplate in him
A prince, a suff'ring exile, and thy brother.

## Scene IV.

ETEOCLES, CREON.

*Ete.* With menaces this Polynices hopes
To bring me to submission, and degrade me?—
What boldness! To my palace unattended
He comes, as if to mock me? Does he deem
That all is gain'd, when he appears in person?

*Cre.* All this I apprehended from the day
That, in the name of Polynices, came,
Claiming the covenanted Theban throne,
The haughty Tideus. The fierce menaces,
The contumelious carriage, which he join'd
To the request, sufficiently convinced me
Of Polynices' sinister designs.
He feign'd pretexts whence he might snatch from thee
The common throne for ever. 'Tis now clear
He wishes for it, never to restore it:
Cost what it may, he wishes for it now;
E'en though the impious path that leads to it
Were with the last drop of thy blood defiled.

*Ete.* Assuredly, he now will be compell'd
To drink that blood e'en to the latest drop;
For my existence and my throne are one.

Shall I indeed become the willing subject,
And swear allegiance to a hated brother?
Hated indeed; but still more scorn'd than hated;
I, who now see none equal to myself?
I should be vile, if from that altitude
I could a moment e'en in thought descend.
From the throne's height a king should never fall
But with the throne itself: he cannot find,
Except beneath its high, exalted ruins,
A worthy sepulchre, a worthy death.
*Cre.* I see, O king, with exultation see
In thee, the lofty valor live again
Of thy magnanimous progenitors.
By thee the name of son of Œdipus,
Clear'd of all stain, will reassume its lustre.
A conquering king, no other fame he'll leave
About himself, except his conquests.
*Ete.* But,
I have not conquer'd yet.
*Cre.* Thou art deceived;
Already, by not fearing, thou hast conquer'd.
*Ete.* What avails flattery? I'm so beset,
That, amid war's vicissitudes, to me
Nothing is left secure, except my courage;
Nothing is left to hope, except revenge.
*Cre.* Thou hitherto art king; I first here swear,
For all thy subjects, for myself, to thee
Inviolable faith. Rather than serve
Thy hated brother, we will all here spend
To the last drop our life-blood. On the traitor,
Should impious fortune smile, he shall alone
Reign o'er the ashes of what once was Thebes.—
But, p'rhaps, if pity for thy faithful subjects
Governs thy breast, thou wilt retract thy purpose
Of open war. Ah! let him only perish
Who plots against thy life; thy safety wills it;
And more than this, the safety of the state.
A brother's death may to a brother seem
Perchance too cruel; but ferocious war,
Protracted war, can that indeed appear
Less cruel to a sov'reign? less unjust?

*Ete.* What do I wish for else, or what else hope,
To what do I more ardently aspire,
Than to oppose my brother, man to man?
This hatred is as old as is my life;
And its indulgence more than life I prize.
*Cre.* Thy life? Dost thou not know it? That is ours.
'Tis true, that valor cannot find a seat
More noble than the bosom of a king:
But ought'st thou to oppose to treason's wiles
An open valor? Is he not a traitor?
What brings him now to Thebes? With sword in hand,
Why should he speak of peace? Or why invoke
His mother? P'rhaps he comes here to seduce her;
His impious sister is already his . . .
Truly great plots are hatching.—Wilt thou not
Defeat such fraudulent contrivances?
*Ete.* Ah, doubt it not! if long he tarry here,
'Twill be to his misfortune. If he live,
To flight he'll be indebted for his life:
I would not trust his death to other hands;
To mine alone 'tis due. And say, what rage
Could strike as far inside that breast, as mine?
*Cre.* Yet, to secure a more consummate vengeance,
Suspend awhile thy too impatient hate.
*Ete.* The means most fatal, fierce, and manifest,
Alone please me.
*Cre.* Yet p'rhaps thou wilt be forced
To choose the most conceal'd. Thy brother comes
Pow'rful in arms . . .
*Ete.* Thebes also has her warriors.
*Cre.* Yet has Adrastus many more. The war
Too unexpectedly comes on us: Ah!
We can but die, beneath thy banners fighting.
*Ete.* But why speak I of warriors? I am one,
One also is my brother.
*Cre.* Dost thou hope
Him to defy? His mother, sister, all,
Around him flocking . . .
*Ete.* But my trusty sword,
Cannot it clear a passage to his person?
*Cre.* And with the effort thou would'st lose thy fame.
Such an excess would be condemn'd in Thebes.

*Ete.* And does not Thebes blame fraud?
*Cre.* That fraud would be
From all conceal'd, or partially discover'd.
And if a king appear not criminal,
It is enough. Thy brother was the' aggressor;
Do thou, by management, make him appear
Still to continue such.
*Ete.* What management? . . .
I understand thee not . . .
*Cre.* Upon myself
I take the whole affair: repose in me;
And listen only to my counsel: thou
In time shalt know it all. First it behoves us
To make him trust to simulated peace:
Do thou so well this stratagem confirm,
That he, without the Argives, may consent
To tarry here in Thebes. Then 'twill be easy
To make the traitor treacherously perish.
*Ete.* Provided that he perish,—and I reign;
A little longer I'll constrain myself
To keep my hatred and my fury pent
Within my bosom.
*Cre.* I will circulate
With art the cry of peace; to peace proposed
Do thou consent with a well-feign'd reluctance:
'Twill be thy interest to-day to cheat
Both friends and foes alike. But, above all,
From the all-trembling bosom of thy mother,
Be e'en the shadow of suspicion banish'd.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

JOCASTA, CREON.

*Cre.* Ah, put an end to thy perpetual tears!
This day, that seem'd the harbinger of slaughter,
Perchance will not be finish'd, ere we see
Thebes blest with lasting peace. I have inspired
Within the bosom of Eteocles

Such horror of this sacrilegious war,
That, in his mind, he almost has resolved
To re-establish violated faith;
Provided that his brother will convert
His menaces to prayers.
*Joc.* Yes, yes, to-day
The brothers' enmity shall have an end;
But what will be that end? It is recorded
By the stern fates; and only known to Heaven.
Ah, with thy flatt'ries may the' event agree!
This is my only hope before I die . . .
Thou could'st, then, somewhat to pacific thoughts
Soften the stern mind of Eteocles?
I will believe it. But, there yet remains
The' embitter'd bosom of my exiled son
To soothe. I will shed tears; for now, alas!
I can do little more: I will commingle
Prayers, threats, and prayers; but thou dost know too well
That I am not, as others are, a mother;
Nor reason warrants that I should expect
That filial rev'rence which I merit not.
*Cre.* Must I again entreat thee to be calm?
Desires for concord, more sincere, were never
Witness'd amid such warlike preparations.
Behold Eteocles: complete thy task,
To which a good beginning I have given.

## Scene II.

JOCASTA, ETEOCLES.

*Joc.* The day is come, O son, in which both thou
And Polynices, in a mother's presence,
Your cause dispassionately must set forth.
Nature betwixt you constitutes me judge.
I, more than any one, can make thy heart
Thrill with the mention of a brother's name,
That sacred name which thou no more regardest.
*Ete.* Does he regard it better than myself?
He is a brother, as a citizen;
A brother, as he is a son and subject:
His various duties he fulfils alike.

*Joc.* Each duty, save the duty of a subject,
It now becomes thee to enumerate.
His subject now thy oath expressly makes thee;
Yet I behold thee king.—Thou shudderest,
In hearing me proclaim thee subject? Say,
Ah say: is it a more illustrious title,
That of a perjured king?

*Ete.* A king despised,
Ah, is not that a title more offensive?
What but his arms emancipate me now
From my pledged oath? I swore without constraint;
Without constraint will I perform my promise.
How could I e'er with boldness re-demand
My ill-defended throne, if I had left it
From abjectness of temper?

*Joc.* Thy stern pride,
Thy courage, are sufficiently notorious;
Establish now thy character for justice.
Make not against thy brother, I conjure thee,
An ostentation of ferocious virtue!
Show thyself gen'rous, pious, and humane;
No other virtues does a mother wish
To witness in a son: perchance they seem
Virtues to thee not worthy of a king?

*Ete.* Not worthy, no, if they from terror spring.—
Brief my discourse shall be: if he can do it,
He, in thy presence, shall his reasons give
For his proceedings. Mother, thou shalt see
That I've a royal soul; and that I hold
My honor dearer than my life and kingdom.

## Scene III.

POLYNICES, JOCASTA, ETEOCLES.

*Joc.* O thou, my long and vainly-wished-for son!
I now again behold thy face in Thebes! . . .
At last to my maternal breast I clasp thee . . .
How much I've wept for thee! . . . Art thou become
More placable? Thou didst invoke thy mother;
Behold her in thy presence: dost thou come
Submissively before her to deposit

The horrid burden of fraternal discord?
Ah, tell me; com'st thou hither to console me,
Or to cut short my few declining years?
*Pol.* O, were I, mother, as I wish to be,
The soother of thy griefs! But, I am such,
That, wheresoe'er I go, I bear with me
The anger of the gods. Already, mother,
I must have cost thee too, too many tears.
*Joc.* Ah, no! we now will weep with joy, not grief.
Advance, and hasten to embrace thy brother;
He is my son, and dear to me as thou:
Speak to him kindly, if thou love me not;
Give him thy right hand; press him to thy bosom . . .
*Ete.* Whither advancest? Warrior, who art thou?
Those arms I do not recognise.—Perchance,
Art thou my brother? No, it cannot be;
For helmet, buckler, sword, and javelin,
Are not the' accoutrements with which a brother
A brother comes to meet.
*Pol.* And who but thou
Put in my hand these instruments of war?
The day that Tydeus, in a brother's name,
Came to these thresholds to demand my kingdom,
Say, did he in his right hand bring the sword,
Or peaceful olive branch? 'Tis true, by day
He was admitted to a conference;
But, on the night of his departure hence,
A plot was laid insidiously to kill him;
And he, alas! had fallen victim to it,
Had he not been invincible. Thus warn'd
By what befell my messenger, I learn,
That in this palace arms decide grave questions.
*Joc.* Ah, say not so: hast thou not here a mother?
And since thou hast one, art thou undefended?
Behold thy buckler, 'tis this breast; this womb,
That in one day to both of you gave birth:
Ah, throw away thy other useless weapons;
They interfere with our embrace; and mutely
Appear to say, that thou'rt a foe 'mongst foes.
*Ete.* Do not expect from me the pledge of peace,
If first thou do not manifest thy purpose;

If first thou do not make us understand,
Why thou, a subject and a citizen,
Dar'st, as invader, to return to Thebes.
*Pol.* My right, to him who measures right by force,
I ill could tell, if force did not attend me.
Greece knows my story; dost thou know it not?—
I'll tell it: thou hast reign'd; but reign'st no longer.
*Ete.* Fool! thou shalt soon know if I reign or not.
*Pol.* Thou hitherto hast had the name and sceptre,
But not the fame and honor of a monarch.
I, who am free from perjury, surrender'd
My throne to thee, when ended was the year;
Didst thou not swear to do the same? I kept
My oath; do thou keep thine.—I come to claim
My heritage: a brother, if thou yield it;
But thou shalt find in me, if thou refuse it,
A foe, fierce, cruel, and implacable.—
Thus have I told to thee, without disguise,
My resolution. In my righteous cause,
Both earth and heav'n proclaim themselves; yes, heav'n,
Already witness of our mutual oaths,
Will, I believe it, favor this my sword,
And will the perjured punish.
*Ete.* The just gods
Whom thou invokest thy misdeeds to second,
Abhor fraternal arms: of their revenge,
A signal instance he will be who first
Ventured to grasp them.
*Pol.* Dar'st thou to recall,
Perfidious one, the tie of brotherhood?
Feel'st thou a horror at it, now that thou
First to fraternal war compellest me?
But, art thou not the same that didst not feel
Horror at perjury? These impious arms,
The violator of his faith first grasp'd them.
The war is thine: its guilt is thine alone . . .
*Joc.* Ferocious souls, is this your hoped-for peace?—
Ah, hear me, I entreat you . . .
*Ete.* I am king,
And sit upon the throne: and here proclaim,
That while Adrastus and his hated Argives

Encompass Thebes, I listen to no terms
Of reconciliation; nor endure
Thee in my royal presence.
*Pol.* I, in turn
Reply to thee, who dost usurp the throne,
Thyself a king miscalling; yes, I here
Reply, that till thou hast fulfill'd thy oath,
The Argives here shall stay, and I with them.
*Ete.* Mother, thou hearest him: the recompense
That for his guilt he asks.—Why parley further?
What dost thou here? Depart from Thebes this instant!
*Pol.* Thou shalt again behold me in this place;
But in another guise: to impious foes
The messenger of death inevitable.
*Joc.* Ye only are the impious; quickly punish,
Of being mother to such impious sons,
The fault in me; plunge, plunge in me that sword;
For I am of the selfsame blood as you.
Rivals in guilt, ye sons of Œdipus,
Of crime the offspring, and to crime impell'd
By the implacable, avenging Furies,
Here, here, your weapons hurl; behold my womb,
The chamber of your infamous conception.
Be not the brother slain, but slain by you
The mother; 'twere a far more venial crime;
And far more worthy of your cruel swords.
*Ete.* Hold'st thou unjust the terms that I demanded?
*Pol.* Hold'st thou my want of confidence unfounded?
*Joc.* And is it, then, my wrath that is unjust?—
Thou'rt not enraged at the demanded sceptre;
But that it is by one in arms demanded?
And for no other cause thou wear'st these weapons,
But to obtain thy sceptre for the year?—
Let one resign his sword, the other quit
The sceptre not his own: and if, betwixt you,
I pledge myself as surety for the keeping,
In future, of the covenanted oath,
Who will refuse obedience?
*Ete.* I will not.—
Mother, thou will'st it? I will therefore pardon
The outrage 'gainst myself and Thebes committed.

Let him first yield; he first assaulted us.
Soon as our fields are clear'd from yonder troops,
He shall be king. I yield to him the throne;
He shall not take it from me. Can he take it,
While still my veins retain a drop of blood?—
Do thou decide: thou see'st in me compliance:
But, if between us both the peace is broken,
Remember, thou'rt alone the guilty cause:
And may the horrors of disastrous war
Fall, where alone they should, upon thy head.

## Scene IV.

JOCASTA, POLYNICES.

*Pol.* And may thy imprecation be accomplish'd:
May Heav'n pour vengeance on my head, if I
Am not sincere in my desire for peace! . . .
*Joc.* Belovèd son, and may I trust thy words?
*Pol.* Mother, I wish to spare the Theban blood;
No wish is dearer to my heart: like me,
Adrastus fain would sheathe the murd'rous sword.
'Tis true that, till he saw me here in Thebes
The' ancestral sceptre grasp, he would refuse,
Although I wish'd it, to return to Argos.
*Joc.* Alas! thou wilt not be the first to yield?
*Pol.* I cannot.
*Joc.* What prevents thee?
*Pol.* Prudence, mother.
*Joc.* Dost thou not trust in me? . . .
*Pol.* I trust him not:
He has deceived me once.
*Joc.* If thou refuse
To free this city from besieging foes,
I shall believe what fame reports of thee;
That thou hast form'd, our ruin to ensure,
Infamous ties of blood with King Adrastus;
And that thou hast of thy wife's father claim'd
War, as the fatal dowry of thy marriage.
*Pol.* O cruel fate! my infant, and my spouse,
On one side emulously rend my heart,
Weeping, and asking bitterly from me

Their wrested birthright; on the other side,
For thee, my mother, deep compassion thrills me,
And for my sick and desolated country . . .
Yet, ah reflect! Thou seeest it thyself;
What would it now avail, if I sent back
My warriors? 'twould not be less manifest,
That if my brother yields, he yields to fear,
And not to my just claims. What will he then
Have gain'd for his proud honor? Well I know,
That far from hence my force withdrawn he wishes,
Since force alone compels him to be just.

*Joc.* And thou alone adoptest force, because
It loosens thee from ev'ry other pact.

*Pol.* Mother! dost thou so little know thy sons?—
Thou know'st full well that we were scarcely born,
Ere hatred tow'rds me fill'd my brother's heart:
He grew in hatred; and in ev'ry vein
Hatred is mingled with his blood. 'Tis true,
I love him not; for 'tis impossible
Hate to return with love: but I wish not
To injure him; so that I do not seem
To bear his scorn, and Greece behold me not
Tamely enduring outrages so vast.

*Joc.* What virtue! Thou expectest Greece to prize thee,
Since to a brother, guiltier than thyself,
Thou dost refuse to yield?—The Theban throne,
Of all thy wishes, is the noble object?
Dost thou not know that here to gain the throne,
Is to gain all that is on earth most wretched?
Think on thy ancestors: who ever reign'd
In Thebes, and was not guilty? Certainly,
The throne on which sat wretched Œdipus
Illustrious is. Dost fear, then, lest the world
Be ignorant that Œdipus had sons?—
Say, hast thou virtue? Leave the throne to guilt.
Wouldst thou take vengeance on thy brother? wouldst thou
That he, by Thebes, by Greece, the world, the gods,
Be execrated? Leave him here to reign.—
I even, also born upon the throne,
Disastrous days, amid its empty pomps,
Days of distraction, each obscurer state

The object of my envy, have dragg'd on.—
What other art thou, O thou dreadful throne,
What other, but an ancient usurpation,
Source of much suff'ring, and of more abhorrence?
O, that I ne'er had fill'd thee, fatal honor!
Then had I never been of Œdipus
The mother and the wife; then had I not
Been the sad mother of you faithless ones.
*Pol.* Mother, thou mortally offendest me.
Deem'st me unfit for my appointed station?
Ah! it is not, no, it is not my object
Each passing fancy to impose as laws,
With hypocritical and foolish pride
To ape resemblance with the gods above;
Though this, by many, may be deem'd to reign,
'Tis not my object. If in happier days
Virtue in me was not a vain pretence,
Now, in my adverse ones, be thou assured,
I hold it still more dear. A throne in Argos
Adrastus offer'd me: if I had loved
A sceptre, for itself, I there had reign'd.
*Joc.* Rather, O son, be anxious to deserve,
Than to obtain, a throne, then. I still hope
That thou wilt have one; yet, if both of us
Thy brother should deceive, I pray thee, tell me,
Whose is the infamy, and whose the glory?
Yield to my reasons, to my prayers, and tears;
Yield to the tears of thy unhappy country:
Wouldst thou destroy Thebes ere thou reign'st in Thebes?
*Pol.* I have already told thee: war I wish not;
But force, for gaining surer peace, is useful.
*Joc.* Lov'st thou thy mother?
*Pol.* Far more than myself.
*Joc.* My life is in thy hands . . .

## Scene V.

CREON, JOCASTA, POLYNICES.

*Joc.* Ah, Creon, come!
Complete my conquest over Polynices;
I haste to use my influence with his brother.

Which of you two will yield? Thou wilt, my son;
If thou rememb'rest that on thee alone
Thy mother's life, the fate of Thebes, depend.

## SCENE VI.

POLYNICES, CREON.

*Cre.* Ah, wretched mother! how I pity her! . . .
Little she knows her sons. Yet she might be
Happy, perchance, if it on thee depended.—
Dost thou then yield? If thou wilt trust thy brother . . .
*Pol.* I have on nothing yet resolved: 'tis true,
It wounds my soul to hear myself proclaim'd
An enemy in Thebes; it wounds my soul
To seem the author of fraternal strife:
What ought I now to do?
*Cre.* To reign.
*Pol.* The throne
Can I have here without the loss of blood?
*Cre.* —E'en from the cradle as a son I loved thee:
I always saw in thee the better nature;
When 'twixt you both your mother hesitated,
How often have I made her notice it!—
O Polynices! I have not the heart
Now to deceive thee, no.—Thou wilt not reign
Here without spilling blood.
*Pol.* O Heav'ns! . . .
*Cre.* But thou
May'st choose: it doth depend on thee alone;
Little to shed, or much . . .
*Pol.* What do I hear?
This, from the first, was what I chiefly fear'd.
I only, then, have choice of error left? . . .
No, it shall never be, no, never: I
Will never violate, by shedding blood,
So many, and such ever-sacred ties;
Whate'er betide, by means iniquitous
I will not prosecute a righteous cause.
Adrastus shall return again to Argos;
Alone, unarm'd, will I remain in Thebes.
*Cre.* Thou art most virtuous, as I always thought thee;

Much I commend thy words: but, can I let thee
Choose what will ruin both thyself and us?
*Pol.* And is that ruin certain?
*Cre.* Dost thou know
Eteocles?
*Pol.* I know him; and he hates me
Much as he loves the throne, and more; but yet,
I think, or maybe 'tis a fond illusion,
That, in despite of him, with gen'rous treatment,
I might constrain him to a gen'rous conduct:
Shame can work wonders; we shall have to-day,
My mother, Thebes, Adrastus and the world,
As witnesses between us . . .
*Cre.* Had he not
The gods before as witnesses? what say'st thou?
His mother, and the gods, Adrastus, Thebes,
And all the world, he impiously scorns.
I feel constrain'd to speak without disguise.—
In Thebes, with iron hand, a perjured king
The sceptre grasps: by all his subjects hated,
If terror had not watch'd in his defence,
He long ago had lost his throne and life.
Thou art the last hope of the Theban people:
That day in which thy milder character
Ascends once more the' hereditary throne,
The multitude oppress'd will deem the day
Of its deliv'rance . . . Where is now our hope? . . .
That day will ne'er arrive.
*Pol.* Will ne'er arrive?
This, this, shall be the day.
*Cre.* P'rhaps, 'twill be this . . .
Ah, day eventful! . . . Prince unfortunate! . . .
Another now usurps that throne from thee;
Nor, while his life remains, wilt thou regain it.—
Ah, trust me, that he even now ascribes
Thy wish for it to guilt: now . . .
*Pol.* What new flames
Of rage thou kindlest in me, when, at last,
After long struggles with myself, I seem'd
Surmounting past revenge!
*Cre.* Erewhile the king

Swore, and I heard him, that he would not die,
Except upon the throne.
*Pol.* To perjury
He is accustom'd, and, on this occasion,
He shall be perjured; this I promise thee.—
Wretch, thou shalt live, but not upon the throne.
*Cre.* Thy hope for this is vain: there is no way
The throne to reascend, if thou resolve not
To trample on the body of thy brother.
*Pol.* With horror thou dost fill me: shall I bathe
My hands in blood fraternal? The wild thought
Appals me . . . Infamous and fatal crown,
Art thou of so much worth, that thou deservest
With turpitude like this to be procured?
*Cre.* If he would take away thy crown alone,
That were excusable: but to such height
In him unnatural hate and rage have risen,
That, life for life, thou art constrain'd by force
To give it, or to take it . . .
*Pol.* I wish not
To take his life . . .
*Cre.* Then thou wilt give him thine.
*Pol.* Though here I stay alone, Heav'n and my sword,
My courage, with me stay; nor will it be
To him an easy task to take my life . . .
*Cre.* But how can valor cope with subtle fraud?
Here dost thou look for open opposition?
*Pol.* Then treach'ry is prepared for me? O speak!
Reveal it to me . . .
*Cre.* Heav'ns! . . . what shall I do? . . .
Yet, if I speak, and thou preventest not
The consequence, I fall the tyrant's victim,
And thee I shall not save.
*Pol.* The apprehension
Of treachery suffices not to make me
An impious traitor. Speak: there may be means
By which I may be saved; or, if I fall,
That I may fall alone.
*Cre.* . . . Thou hast not learn'd
Thyself to perjure yet . . .—Dar'st thou to me

Promise thy sacred faith a horrid secret
To keep, that I prepare to tell thee now?
*Pol.* Yes; by my mother's life I swear to keep it;
'Tis sacred to me, as thou knowest: speak.
*Cre.* . . . But we are in the palace, an abode
Too perilous for us; . . . p'rhaps here already
Too much at length to thee I've spoken . . . Hence,
To some securer spot . . .
*Pol.* Is there in Thebes
A place exempted from the tyrant's power?
*Cre.* 'Tis meet that, with profoundest caution, we
Elude his subtle wariness. From hence
A secret path, and long disused, descends
Towards the temple: let us seek this path.
There I will tell thee all.
*Pol.* I follow thee.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

ETOCLES, CREON.

*Ete.* Hast thou seen Polynices? Dost thou think
That he hates me as much as I hate him?
Ah, no! in this, as well as other things,
I do surpass him quite.
*Cre.* With hating thee
He is not satisfied; he feels for thee
The bitterest contempt. He hath already
Swerved from his purpose; loudly he asserts,
That he will have, as witnesses in Thebes
Of this fraternal peace, his friends from Argos;
In my opinion, to insult us more;
Nor shall we see them from our gates depart,
Till thou, a wand'ring exile, leav'st this city.
Thou see'st that now, for one, there doth remain
But a brief moment to forestall the other;
He who delays the most will fall the victim.

'Tis now most evident, that he, by force,
Challenges thy refusal: o'er thy head
The fatal sword is now suspended; thou,
Wilt thou not give the signal to unsheathe it?
To thee 'twas hitherto expedient merely,
But to thy safety indispensable
His death has now become.
*Ete.* May I, at last,
To my revenge, for which so long I've sigh'd,
And to my hate and rage, succeed in giving
A consummation speedy and secure!
When he is dead, a valor in the camp
Will I display proportion'd to the cause.—
Adrastus, prosecute the siege of Thebes;
And thou shalt quickly see, that in the fight
I can atone for treason in the palace.
*Cre.* The Argives, trusting to the truce, secure
Within the camp repose: 'twould be most easy
To make a dreadful carnage, if upon them
Thou should'st fall unawares. With their alarm
A dreadful doubt would mingle: they would know
Nothing of Polynices . . .
*Ete.* Say'st thou, nothing?
They shall know all; and of another kind
Shall be their apprehension. To the Argives
The traitor's head shall be display'd on high;
Lugubrious symbol to our foes alone
Of portent ominous; but, to ourselves,
The presage, and the pledge of victory.
*Cre.* Then do not be importunate with him
To send the hostile troops again to Argos.
Thou wouldst augment, and vainly, his suspicions:
And should he yield, which is not probable,
It would be detrimental to thy cause.
Adrastus would have scarcely left our plains,
Than, afterwards, in hearing of the death
Giv'n to his son-in-law in Thebes, more fierce
He, his avenger, would return; to blood,
To fire, and the exterminating sword,
Devoting all the ill-defended realm.
King, thou hast chosen well: with one hand give

Correction to the traitor; with the other,
At one fierce onset, unexpectedly
Bring on thy foes, war, fear, confusion, ruin.
*Ete.* A ruin most complete, since least expected.
Do thou prepare for war; while I feign peace . . .
But see, my mother comes: let us retire;
If ever there was need to shun her presence,
This is the moment.
*Cre.* Let us both avoid her.

## SCENE II.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE.

*Joc.* Dost see? He shuns my sight: still doth he doubt
To trust his mother? . . .
*Ant.* An usurper fears
All whom he meets.
*Joc.* Since he beheld his brother,
He has most carefully our presence shunn'd:
To what must I impute it?
*Ant.* Canst thou doubt?
In his dissembling breast he cherishes
Hatred and rancor, blood and fell revenge.
*Joc.* Thou putt'st on all his deeds an ill construction.
Unjust were not the terms that he demanded:
And if to-day the' invading brother yields,
(As almost he has pledged himself to do,)
To my entreaties, and the voice of reason;
I do not see with what pretence the king
Could e'er excuse his violated faith.
*Ant.* Will the king ever be in pretexts wanting
For violated faith? 'Tis vain to hope
For peace, if Polynices does not yield
The throne for ever to Eteocles.
It cannot be conceal'd, the throne alone
Can somewhat mitigate the' atrocious cast
Of his ambitious nature: he esteems
That throne the dearest portion of himself,
A second life.
*Joc.* And yet his accents prove,
That more he values than the throne, that honor

Which gives the throne its lustre: to be brief,
'Twas Polynices who did menace first.
*Ant.* He was the first offended.—Did a heart
That was invincible, e'er learn the way
How to dissemble outrages received?
Full of revenge, but of a regal kind,
Proudly does Polynices from his lips
Pour forth his indignation: mute his brother;
Mute, yet around him, I, at all times, see
A train immense of counsellors, from whom,
'Tis certain, that he never will imbibe
Impressions high, or gen'rous. In this place
There are enough of those degraded wretches,
Who love themselves alone; to whom the name
Of country is unknown; who freeze with terror,
And shudder at the notion that a king
May mount the throne who loves the cause of virtue:
Nor fear they without reason; they would drag
Their days in heaviness beneath the sway
Of such a monarch. I affirm it, mother,
And do thou mark my words, that to this peace
So much desired, the evanescent rage
Of Polynices, of Eteocles
The more inveterate and deeper hate,
Are not invincible impediments:
The wicked obstacle is in the vile
And lying accents of the servile throng.

## Scene III.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE, POLYNICES.

*Joc.* My son, I hope in thee, in thee alone;
Thy mother, Thebes, thy sister, whom thou lovest,
And who so much loves thee, with lasting peace
All these wilt thou make happy. Is't not true?
Answer me. Art thou not the best of sons,
The better brother, a good citizen?
Prepares Adrastus to return to Argos?
*Pol.* Prepares Eteocles from Thebes to go?
*Joc.* What do I hear? to our confusion, then,
And to thy shame, must I for ever hear thee

Deny us peace, or not the first consent?
Alas! thy brother will too surely go,
Too surely, as thou wentest, go to exile:
By Heav'n am I condemn'd, and by my sons,
To everlasting tears; they ne'er will cease.
Feed'st thou, perchance, on my maternal tears?
Ah, say: were not thy words erewhile all peace?
*Pol.* Alas! they're farther now from peace than ever:
Thou must not ask of me the cause; but yet
There does exist for this a cause so horrid,
That I can never tell it thee; thou wilt,
Ere long, discover it thyself; a chill,
A mortal chill, through all thy bones will run,
When thou dost hear it. More I cannot say,
Than that Adrastus does not leave these walls;
No, he departs not.—Soon, in spite of me,
The haughty walls of perjured Thebes, laid low,
May yield him entrance 'mid their broken fragments:
But, let the evil come to him who courts it.
I, in the sanguinary fray, perchance,
May also find a tomb; nor will it grieve me;
Provided that I fall not unavenged.
*Joc.* Alas! on whom dost thou thus thirst for vengeance?
*Pol.* Upon a traitor.
*Joc.* He the traitor is,
Who, thus, flagitiously, with fabled plots,
Doth feed in thee this impious doubt and rage:
Believe me only . . .
*Ant.* Mother, brother, hear me:
Trust only my alarm.
*Joc.* Say'st thou, alarm? . . .
Speak; what alarm hast thou?
*Ant.* Eteocles
Has Creon for his counsellor; and thence
There's reason for a dreadful terror . . .
*Joc.* Creon?
*Pol.* Ah, were it only he that counsels him! . . .
I'm too well versed to be the dupe of this . . .
Creon . . . had it not been for him . . . ah, maybe
To impious vengeance I . . .

*Joc.* What do I hear?
What broken sentences! what bursts of anger!
What secret weighs upon thy bosom? Speak.
*Pol.* I cannot speak. As I can now be silent,
O that I could forget, or ne'er have known,
The infamous vile secret! 'Twould have been
More fortunate for all; a single crime
Had then sufficed; 'twere better to have died
Betray'd, than thus revenged. And yet to know it,
And to be passive, is impossible . . .
O what a deluge I behold of blood!
What slaughter! Of his friendship what a proof . . .
What fatal proof to me has Creon given! . . .
*Ant.* Yes, brother, now indeed I pity thee.
What didst thou say? The harbinger of death
Is the false friendship of the wicked Creon.
*Joc.* 'Tis true, till now, of Polynices' claims
He never seem'd the advocate: but what
Must I infer from this? My daughter, dar'st thou? . . .
*Pol.* E'en more than others are, of my just cause,
And of myself, is Creon advocate.
*Ant.* Creon betrays you all; I swear he does:
Of all your rights the villain makes a sport.
*Joc.* Where learn'd'st thou such harsh judgments? whence so bold?
Is Creon not my brother? . . . shall his nephews? . . .
*Ant.* Too long have I been silent; and e'en now
I do not speak at random. Of that Creon,
Who is thy brother, Haemon is the son;
He knows his father; he himself inform'd me . . .
Why should I waste more words? I swear again,
He hates you both: to the contested throne
Creon aspires; and what atrocity
Is there, that clears a passage to the throne,
That is not learn'd in Thebes?
*Joc.* Believe it not . . .
And yet, who knows? . . . This, this alone was wanting
To all our other horrors! . . .
*Pol.* Where have I
Enter'd incautiously? What labyrinth
Of unexampled perfidy! My foes,
My most atrocious foes, I here am doom'd

Among my kindred to enumerate?—
But you, to whom I listen; you, whom now
I see in friendly semblance round me stand;
How can I know if in your breasts there dwell
Or faith or treachery? How can I know
If ye are not in thought my enemies?
Thou art my mother; and my sister thou:
What avails this? Such names, 'tis true, are sacred;
But in this Thebes such names are too portentous.
Do not I call the' usurper brother? call
Creon my uncle?—Inauspicious palace,
Where to the hated light my eyes I open'd!
The vile confederates within thy walls
Are all, all of my blood; and I, forsooth,
The laughing-stock of all. Exiled so long,
I find myself a stranger in my palace:
Where'er I turn my apprehensive gaze,
I see a traitor. All life's charities
Are banish'd hence. What do I seek in Thebes?
What do I hope? why stay? What death more dreadful
Than living in suspicion in your midst?—
Yes, yes, I feel it; at my birth, ye Furies,
Ye only did preside; and o'er my life
Ye, ye, preside alone: to what distress,
To what foul stain, do ye reserve my life? . . .
P'rhaps from Avernus ye alone repel me,
Ye dire Eumenides, since I am yet
Not quite so wicked as was Œdipus?

*Joc.* O thou, of Œdipus the worthy son,
Dost thou accuse of treachery thy mother?
Dar'st thou invoke the Furies of thy birth? . . .

*Pol.* What other gods should be invoked in Thebes? . . .

*Ant.* My brother . . .

*Joc.* Son . . .

*Pol.* My fittest home is Argos:
Faith still is kept in Argos: there I live
Secure from foes, and never hear the name
Of brother, or of son.

*Joc.* Return to Argos;
Fly, go there quickly; and in Thebes confide
Alone in those who're seeking to betray thee.

*Pol.* With equal safety I confide in Thebes

In those who love, and those who hate my person . . .
O cruel doubt, whence I in terror live,
And scarcely trust myself! I have no throne,
Yet all a monarch's perturbations feel;
Guilty suspicion, and degrading terror,
And the unnatural effects of rage.
O horrid movements, of my heart unworthy,
Which I, till now, ne'er knew! why do I feel
Your sway omnipotent, and omnipresent?
In Thebes there is a more consummate tyrant:
For you his bosom is a fitter dwelling;
Tear him to pieces: let him ne'er taste peace
Amid his many crimes; that peace, of which
I'm so unjustly robb'd.

*Ant.* Ah, calm thyself;
Listen to us: thy wretched mother's heart
Thou piercest with thy words. We both do love thee,
As son and brother ne'er were loved before.

*Joc.* Compose thyself; thy most unjust suspicions
Fain would I not remember. Thou shouldst hide
Nothing from me; speak, my belovèd son;
Ah, be constrain'd by pity for thy mother!
The horrid secret, pent up in thy breast,
Tell it: and p'rhaps . . .

*Pol.* O mother! . . . I have sworn
To keep it; and my faith's inviolate:
Before I forfeit that, ah, let me perish!—
It may appear in Thebes excess of virtue:
Such it seems not to me: my own applause
Is dear to me; not the applause of Thebes.

*Joc.* Keep then thy oath, since it involves my death;
Fulfil thy vows; give me a thousand deaths:
And leave in doubt the palpitating heart
Of a most wretched mother: she knows not
Which son in danger, which in safety, lives;
Keep thou from her the means of saving both.

*Ant.* More than thy oath, inviolably sacred,
And far more ancient, are the ties of nature.

*Pol.* Who first infringed them?

*Joc.* If, by breach of oath,
Thou canst save blood, and frustrate treach'rous deeds,
The heav'ns absolve the compact.

*Pol.* Why should I
Seek to protect the life-blood of a traitor?
Let it be shed, but in the field: deceit
Let the deceiver use, it well becomes him:
But a short time remains to weave new frauds.
*Ant.* O brother, thou didst love me once; but if
That love no longer second my entreaties,
I do conjure thee by thy wife, beloved
Far more than we are; by thy little child,
Whom thou with tears didst name; ah, cast from thee,
I do conjure thee, ev'ry thought of vengeance!
Say, wouldst thou thy hereditary throne
With foulest crimes and blood contaminate?
Blood, which is not thy own, thou canst not shed
In Thebes.
*Joc.* Accumulated vengeance falls
Upon thy head in Thebes: thy footsteps turn
From the dread precipice which yawns before thee;
Thou yet hast time to do it: if thou be
(Which I believe not) by Eteocles
Ensnared, each plot which thou to me revealest,
Thou, by that deed, dost frustrate; dost forestall
All the necessity for fell revenge.
Belovèd son, whate'er the crime may be,
It cannot, by a brother's death, be cancell'd.
*Pol.* Why didst thou make me brother to this traitor?
*Joc.* And why wilt thou in wickedness surpass him?
*Pol.* Thou tear'st my heart asunder . . . would'st thou hear? . . .
Perchance a lie . . . perchance a double treach'ry; . . .
Perchance . . . what can one here believe? . . . Farewell.
*Joc.* Stay, stay!
*Ant.* See, Creon comes.

## Scene IV.

CREON, JOCASTA, ANTIGONE, POLYNICES.

*Joc.* Deliver me
From a tremendous, horrible suspicion . . .
Ah, say . . . Can it be so? . . .
*Cre.* True joy and peace,

A lasting peace I bring you. Dry your tears,
O ladies. Polynices is our king.—
I hasten first to yield a subject's homage . . .
*Pol.* Ah, may the omen be propitious to me:
Who, more than thou, doth wish to see me reign?
*Joc.* Dost thou speak truth?
*Cre.* Drive all suspicion hence;
I from the court have all suspicion chased.
Eteocles is changed . . .
*Pol.* Eteocles
Is changed?—And is it Creon tells me so?
*Cre.* The plot is hush'd at present.[1]—It is true,
That my persuasions were inadequate
To make him yield, had there not been to these
More cogent reasons join'd. Each warrior brave
Murmurs in Thebes; and, for a perjured king,
Reluctantly equips himself for battle.
The universal backwardness compels him;
This he allows not; but who does not see it?
He's conquer'd by necessity, yet chooses,
By lofty phrase, to hide it from the world.
*Joc.* I've heard thee speak of him in diff'rent terms.
*Cre.* Thou heard'st me to the king, in flatt'ring speech,
Strive to adorn the truth: this I deny not:
But does he ever, with sincerity,
Permit me to address him? O severe
And despicable servitude! And yet,
Had I not flatter'd him, more banefully
Others instead had done it. Yet, behold,
To win him to his duty, not a little
Does it conspire, that I had heretofore
Made his heart captive.—In a little time
He will convene you here; it is his will
That all the people, and the sacred priests,
The altars of the gods, the deed should witness:
Hence, he himself, in ceremonial pomp,
Will lead thee to the throne . . .
*Joc.* Am I permitted
Hopes to indulge like these? It cannot be!

[1] In a whisper to Polynices.

Fallacious hope a thousand times hath flatter'd,
A thousand times deceived me.
*Cre.* What, I pray,
Dost thou now fear? to consummate the deed
The rite alone is wanting: I confess,
That, if I trusted to his virtue only,
I might have apprehensions; but I place
In his well-grounded fears my confidence.
He has not, of the Theban populace,
Either the hearts or hands: he will, however,
Affect the merit to bestow on thee
That sceptre, which the murmurs of the people
Snatch from his grasp; in that alone indulge him.
*Pol.* —I will.
*Ant.* Ah, pause awhile. Within my breast
I feel a horrid presage . . .
*Pol.* Presently
Hither will we return.
*Joc.* I also tremble . . .
*Ant.* Unhappy I!
*Pol.* I do not, cannot tremble.
My right is just: the gods are on my side.—
In their default, I have this trusty sword.

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## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

ETEOCLES, JOCASTA, POLYNICES, ANTIGONE, PRIESTS, PEOPLE, SOLDIERS.

*Joc.* Ye gods! if this be the propitious day
Of wish'd-for peace, ah, let it be my last.
'Twould be too great presumption to expect
Others like this hereafter to arise;
This is the summit of my warmest hopes . . .
But where is Creon? . . .
*Ete.* He will soon be here.—
If now thou fear, thou wilt offend me, mother:

No less than thine is my desire for peace;
Since thus I purchase it, and to obtain it
Surrender thus my kingdom. Unconstrain'd
I yield; 'tis taken not from me by force,
Although the' injurious rumor will be spread
That I could not defend it. But the truth
Shall be made manifest: I would not keep it;
Nor thee, O mother, would I longer hold
'Twixt hope and fear suspended. To my deed,
My only motives are the gen'ral good,
The safety of my people. Yet I prize,
And still recall the name of citizen:
And this will prove, too; to the shame, perchance,
Of such as trample with unholy feet
Their country's sacred rites.—I never, no,
Never more worthy I esteem'd myself,
Nor was, more worthy than I am to-day
To fill my throne; yea, at the very moment,
In which, self-moved, I from that throne descend.

*Pol.* Lofty professions, from a lofty heart!—
Magnanimous as thy professions are
I shall esteem thy nature; maybe 'tis so.
Time, and our deeds, at length will manifest
Whether, in all things, our resemblance holds.—
I can assure thee, that the sceptre never
Was, in my sight, less precious than to-day;
To-day that I am destined to regain it.
I have not been the first to tender peace;
Though, p'rhaps, e'en more than others in my heart,
Yea, in my very sword, I carry it.—
If I have not sent back the troops to Argos,
Thou know'st the reason . . .

*Ete.* What is this thou sayest?
Whence should I know it? Can I read thy heart?
Soon wilt thou reign; then shall we see how far
Thou mak'st thy claim good to the name of hero.
For the prosperity of Thebes, I wish
That thou wert greater than thou seem'st, or art.—
Never could gnawing envy discompose
My soul's tranquillity: thy government,
If it please Thebes, will be by me commended:

Although I now am destined to depart
An exile from my country, evermore
Both in its adverse, and its prosp'rous state,
I shall alike partake: whate'er my fate,
I evermore shall rise superior to it:
And in whatever land the Deities
May fix my destiny, those gods shall hear
My fervent vows for thy successful sway.

*Pol.* I also have endured a bitter exile,
Sever'd from all that is on earth accounted
Or dear or precious. Were it not that thou
Wouldst deem the sight of me upon thy throne
Far harder to endure than any exile,
Painful as it might be, I would assure thee,
Within this palace, in our native Thebes,
Inviolable safety: but, methinks,
To hear thyself proclaim'd a subject here,
Here, where thou hast so long the sceptre sway'd,
Would be too exquisite a sufferance
For thy exalted heart...

*Ete.* The' alternate law,
I fear, would scarcely be observed between us:
My presence, p'rhaps, in spite of my desire,
Might here occasion tumults. If in Thebes
I no one had to fear except my brother,
I might securely there in privacy
Pass on my days; but in a monarch's heart
Suspicion is instinctive: and no king
(However virtuous) has enough of virtue
To banish from his heart unfair mistrust:
Close by his royal side, upon the throne,
Suspicion sits with flatt'ry.—For thy peace,
And for my own peace, must I not stay here.
I go: the' example thou hast given me:—
I hope, alone, in my departure hence
To imitate thy conduct; but once more,
Far diff'rently to what thyself hast done,
In Thebes to reappear.

*Pol.* Thou, in thy heart,
Dost cherish a just hope; a hope that shows,
Spite of thyself, thou deem'st me not forsworn;

That thou art well assured, that I need not
The sword to make me recollect my oath.
*Joc.* My sons, what accents do I hear? O Heav'ns!
I plainly see in ev'ry word and gesture
Your ill-conceal'd and unextinguish'd hate
In each of you break forth.—And is this not
The day, the hour, appointed by you both
To terminate your strife iniquitous?
And is not this the place where ye proposed,
With more coercive rites, and firmer faith,
To renovate your violated oaths?
How ill do taunting accents of defiance,
How inauspiciously they usher in
A compact so tremendous! On the lips
Of each sit words of peace, while on each heart
Sits war enthroned: by each is faith invoked;
Insult each reprobates; yet both indulge it,
And each denies to give the faith he asks:
P'rhaps ere ye plight your oaths, ye both are perjured...
What boots delay, if this be not the case?
*Ete.* Wise counsel: why should we a moment longer
Delay the sacred rite? 'Tis most unwise
To tamper thus with wounds heal'd partially.—
I will not sully, with contending more,
That glory which is mine exclusively;
The glory of bestowing peace on one
Who threatens me with overwhelming war.—
Ho! bring, quick bring to us, the sacred cup;
And be the' initiatory rite accomplish'd,
The rite of our forefathers.—May the oath,
Yes, mother, may to-day the' alternate oath
Make thee, my sister, my afflicted country,
Yea, all of you, secure!—Behold the cup,
My brother; contemplate it reverently;
To thee I first present it. On its brim,
Fill'd with a sacred terror, fix thy lips;
The' observer, not betrayer, of the laws,
Swear to ascend the throne; and further swear,
That to thy brother, when the year's accomplish'd,
Thou wilt restore the sceptre of thy fathers.

*Pol.* Why should I swear to yield what yet I grasp not?
First thou shouldst swear that thou wilt give it me;
I, to restore it, next.
*Ete.* Now art not thou
He, that to Thebes brings tumult and disgrace,
Slaughter and flames? Who but thyself alone
Can reassure the apprehensive people,
Weeping through thee, and kept by thee in torment?—
Matrons disconsolate depend on thee;
Old age depends on thee; and trembling wives,
And guileless babes (behold!) towards thee stretch
Their suppliant hands.—Why dost thou now delay?
'Tis evident that all expect from thee,
Expect from thee alone, the promised peace.
*Pol.* This cup, which now thou bringest, is the pledge
Of amity fraternal, . . . of thy faith?
*Ete.* The pledge it is of sacred amity . . .
*Pol.* Dar'st thou assert it?
*Ete.* Canst thou doubt my word?
*Pol.* Behold, then, from my brother I receive
A pledge . . . an infamous, unnatural pledge . . .
Unnatural pledge of most unnatural hate;
A pledge of everlasting hate betwixt us,
Which in the blood of both of us alone
Can e'er be quench'd.—Antigone, Jocasta,
Ye Thebans, witness how he keeps his faith:
Eteocles,—This cup has poison in it.
*Ete.* O vile suspicion! Liar! . . .
*Joc.* Do I hear it?
Dar'st thou of such foul stain impeach thy brother?
*Pol.* Yes, I dare do it. By thyself I swear,
O mother; there is poison in the cup:
And, mother, I swear not by thee in vain.
The stain is dire and foul, most foul, yet true.—
Eteocles, dar'st thou give me the lie?
First taste the cup: behold it: I consent
To taste it afterwards, and with thee die.
*Ete.* Because thou'rt worthy of a traitor's death,
Dar'st thou, before all Thebes, to stigmatize
Me with the crime of treason? What? Shall I
Degrade myself to an unworthy test,

To cure thee of suspicion? . . . Thou dost feign
An apprehension thou dost not believe,
And awkwardly dost feign it . . . *fratricide!*
Infamous fratricide am I, forsooth?—
And if I wish the death that is thy due
To give to thee, art thou not in my power?
Why stoop to fraud while force is in my hands?
Am I not yet a monarch here in Thebes?
My subject thou, who could deliver thee
From the tremendous anger of thy lord? . . .

*Pol.* 'Tis easy the deliv'rance from thy anger;
But, ah! not easy from thy subtle frauds.
Thy subject, I could make thee tremble; thee—
Thee, and thy minions, in thy very palace . . .
But, conscious of thy guilt, thou hast no courage
To challenge me to war . . .

*Ete.* Even as thou
Resumest all thy fury, I resume
All mine; and ev'ry one is witness here
That thou dost goad me to it . . . — Lay aside
All pretexts: cast aside, without delay,
The desecrated cup. Eternal war,
Eternal hatred, thou hast sworn to me;
Eternal war and hate to thee I swear.

*Joc.* —A little while delay.—Give me that cup,
Give it to me; although it death contain:
I fearlessly will press it to my lips.—
Happy, if on this day the gods fulfil
My long desire for death! Thus, from the sight,
The impious sight of my atrocious sons,
I shall eternally obtain deliv'rance.—
One of you is a traitor; which, I know not.
The gods alone know this.—Great Deities,
To you alone, on this ill-omen'd day,
My vows are all directed: in that cup
The truth lies hidden; it shall be reveal'd:
Give it to me; the doubt shall be dispell'd . . .

*Pol.* No; that shall never be . . .

*Ant.* What wouldst thou do,
O mother?—Polynices, grasp the cup,
Securely grasp it, brother!—'Tis thy gift,

Eteocles! What art thou doing? First
Let Creon be brought hither; ev'ry crime
To him is known; . . . he's the prime instrument . . .
*Joc.* Unhand me, daughter; leave me; hold thy peace.
Be Creon what he may, I have no wish
To hear more tidings: death alone I seek; . . .
And, in the troubled look of one of you, . . .
And in the fatal silence, I perceive
My death.—Be satisfied; I haste to drink it.
*Ant.* Ah, stop!
*Pol.* O mother, from my hands the cup
Thou vainly hop'st to get . . .
*Ete.* Give me that cup,
Give it to me.—To earth I cast it thus:
And break, at the same time, all peace betwixt us.—
I, in the field of battle, with my sword
The wicked accusation will refute.
*Pol.* One skill'd to poison, ill will wield a sword.
*Ete.* Too ardently I thirst to have thy blood.
*Pol.* Perchance my sword may drink thy blood the first.
*Ete.* P'rhaps, in the field, in our abhorrèd blood,
We both at once may emulously bathe.
Thou shalt there surely taste another cup:
There we will drink each other's blood; and swear,
E'en after death, interminable hate.
*Pol.* I swear at once to punish and despise thee.
Ah! thou wert never worthy of my hatred;
Nor art thou. The abominable throne,
By thee contaminate, with thee shall fall.
Ah, could I thus destroy all memory
Of our accursed and execrable race! . . .
*Ete.* Now, truly, thou a very brother art.
*Joc.* True sons ye are of Œdipus and me.—
In you I see again the Furies rise,
Who erst presided o'er my nuptial bed.
Now, now, ye hasten, with a horrid joy,
To expiate my fault; and fratricide
Shall make atonement for incestuous guilt.—
Why do ye linger, valiant as ye are?
Why do ye interrupt your hellish rage? . . .

*Ete.* Mother, we needs must fate's decrees obey:
Of crime we are the offspring; in our veins
Turpitude creeps connatural with our blood.—
[*To Polynices.*
While thou hast time, withdraw from me and vengeance;
Quickly, before my sword . . .
*Pol.* What is thy sword?
*Ete.* Fly, seek asylum in the Argive camp;
E'en there I shall not fail to bring thee death.

## Scene II.

CREON, ETEOCLES, JOCASTA, POLYNICES, ANTIGONE, PRIESTS, PEOPLE, SOLDIERS.

*Cre.* We are betray'd; and broken is the truce.
Adrastus on all sides the wall assaults,
And threatens Thebes to level with the ground,
If Polynices instantly appear not,
Restored to liberty, without the gates.
*Ete.* Adrastus! 'Tis not he that has betray'd us;
I know the traitor well:—I now could take
On him, and on Adrastus at a blow,
On Polynices also, a fierce vengeance;
What could prevent me? . . . Nothing but my hatred,
Which, with one blow, would ill be satisfied.—
From Thebes in safety, Polynices, go:
Consider as a pledge of faith, the wish,
The ardent wish, that, ever since my birth,
I've cherish'd in my breast of meeting thee
In the fierce trial of our rival swords.—
Thou, Creon, in the camp expect to die:
—By Theban battle-axe, or Argive sword,
I leave it to thy choice.
*Joc.* O son! . . .
*Ete.* In vain
Thou wouldst oppose my will.
*Joc.* Son, hear me, . . . Ah! . . .
*Ete.* Guards, let my mother stir not from the palace.—
No obstacle remains: I now expect
To meet thee on the plain.

## Scene III.

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, ANTIGONE.

*Pol.* I hasten thither.
Tremble.
*Joc.* He is thy brother. Listen to me . . .
*Pol.* He is my enemy; he has betray'd me . . .
My honor . . .
*Joc.* Honor's voice bids thee abstain
From all misdeeds. O son! I pray thee pause . . .
What art thou rushing to perform? . . . O Heav'ns!
*Pol.* And while for me Adrastus danger braves,
Should I stay here subdued by women's tears?
In vain the hope.
*Joc.* The sword, . . . thrust by thy hand, . . .
Into thy brother's breast? . . .
*Pol.* I am constrain'd
On yonder plain to show myself: I there
Would gain an honor'd death. Him, whom thou call'st
My brother, there I will not seek, and hope
Not to encounter him. So much to thee
I promise. Now farewell.
*Joc.* Death steals upon me.
*Ant.* Have pity on thyself, on us have pity . . .
*Pol.* Deaf to all pity I am forced to be:
I fly . . .
*Joc.* Ah, where? O stop . . .
*Pol.* To death.
*Joc.* He leaves me! . . .

## Scene IV.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE.

*Joc.* Alas! these eyes shall never see them more! . . .
Thou only now art left, my loving child . . .
Ah, come with me, Antigone, and close
The dying eyes of thy unhappy mother.

## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

JOCASTA.

*Joc.* Antigone returns not.—Hard constraint
That here confines me! Trembling, and alone,
Am I then destined from afar to hear
The savage clamor of the wicked strife?
The consummation am I destined here
To wait, of the abhorr'd fraternal vengeance? . . .
Wretch that I am! Do I yet live? Yet hope?—
What can I hope? I have no hope on earth:
Alas! my life abhorr'd is the effect
Of destiny, which wills that I should take
Part in the fratricide, then cease to breathe.
There doth remain no other trespass now,
Except this crime, to perpetrate in Thebes;
Shall not Jocasta be to this a witness?—
O ye, of Thebes the sov'reign arbiters,
Tremendous Deities of dread Avernus,
Why do ye now delay to burst asunder
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyss,
And instantly engulf us? I, perchance,
Am I not she who to my son have given
Both sons and brothers? . . . Are not those fierce youths,
Who now in battle drink each other's blood,
The fruit of horrid incest? We are yours,
Yours utterly, infernal Deities.—
O pangs unutter'd, and unutterable!
All the affections of a mother move me,
And yet to be a mother I abhor.—
But, what has happen'd? . . . Suddenly the din,
The hollow din, of distant battle ceases . . .
To the tremendous dissonance succeeds
A silence as tremendous . . . Fatal silence!
To me the presage of more fatal tidings!
Who knows? . . . perchance the battle is suspended . . .
Alas! . . . perchance the fatal strife is over.—
What should I think, alas! what hope, what fear?

For whom breathe vows? For whom ask victory?—
Alas! for neither: they are both my sons.
O thou, whoe'er thou art, who palms hast won,
Into my presence come not; tremble; fly,
Delinquent—fly; entirely I devote
My undivided pity to the conquer'd:
Companion shades, we will descend together
To Pluto's realms, and ask for vengeance there:
Nor can I ever bear to see a son,
Who, o'er a brother gasping on the earth,
Has raised the standard of flagitious conquest.

## SCENE II.

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA.

*Joc.* Antigone . . .—Thou speakest not . . . Thy face
Is pale with hues of death . . . I see it all:
That silence, that excruciating silence . . .
*Ant.* To a fierce strife it yielded.
*Joc.* . . . Are they dead . . .
My sons? . . .
*Ant.* One only . . .
*Joc.* Which then lives? Ah, traitor!
I will myself . . .
*Ant.* The combat I espied
From yon high tow'r: he fell upon the earth
Immersed in blood . . .
*Joc.* Which? . . . Speak . . .
*Ant.* Eteocles.
*Joc.* Thus Polynices hath fulfill'd his promise,
Thus died, thus shunn'd the execrable fight?
Ah, miscreant! Thy abominable rage
Thou then designedst to indulge, and cheat
Thy mother: tremble: for I yet am living:
And from thy breast that impious heart I gave thee
Will tear with my own hands . . .
*Ant.* Thou know'st not all:
Thy blame of Polynices is misplaced . . .
*Joc.* I blame the living; he alone is guilty . . .
*Ant.* Who knows if he is living still!—O mother,
If thou hast strength to listen, thou wilt learn,

That he was more unfortunate than guilty.—
Scarce had he gain'd the plain, when round him press'd
A valiant band of Argive warriors brave,
Who, emulously, to the sky sent up
A dreadful shout, announcing victory.
In a remote part of the plain the battle
Raged yet in doubtful conflict; in the midst
Eteocles rose eminent; prepared,
In front, to cope with him, Adrastus stood;
And Tydeus, with his heart inflamed with thoughts
Of vengeance. Polynices, with swift feet.
Towards the savage contest ran: alarm
Before him flew; and death pursued his steps.
To right, to left, in front, in thousand shapes,
And frightful all, a thousand deaths he dealt;
Nor was the death he sought to him allotted.
Where'er he turn'd his steps the Thebans waver'd,
Yielded, and fled; and hoped, by flight, to gain
Opprobrious safety. From the flying troops
Eteocles leaps forth in furious guise,
And with an accent terrible exclaims:
"To Polynices!" *On his steps he runs,*
*Precipitate; and so at last he finds him...*
*Joc. Alas! O dreadful!... Did the other fly?...*
*Ant. How could he fly from such ferocious pride?*
*Eteocles in haughty scorn broke forth;*
*Tax'd him with cowardice; defiance breath'd;*
*And dared him forcibly to single combat.*
"Thebans," he cried with a tremendous voice,
"Thebans and Argives, cease your guilty rage.
"Ye have descended to the field of battle
"In our contention, prodigal of life:
"Let us, ourselves, to a conclusion bring
"This unjust waste of blood, e'en in your presence,
"And on this field of death. And thou, whom I
"Should no more call my brother, do thou spare
"The blood of Thebes: thy hate, thy rage, thy sword,
"All, all, on me let fall, on me alone."—
To speak and leap with fury to the charge,
Were actions of one instant.
*Joc.* Infamous!...

But how? to such a combat was the field,
By those arm'd multitudes, surrender'd tamely?
*Ant.* A universal fear, at such a sight,
Palsied the troops. Commingled as they were,
Stupid, immovable, both armies stood
Spectators of the contest.—Drunk with blood
And fury, of his own life quite regardless,
Provided his antagonist he slew,
Eteocles upon his wretched brother
Falls with his sword, and all his strength collects.—
For a long time, intent to ward his blows,
Stands Polynices; gen'rously he fears
More for his wicked brother than himself,
Refusing to attack him. But, at length,
Seeing his brother obstinately chase him,
And press upon him more and more, and force him,
He cries: "I call to witness Heav'n and Thebes,
"Thou will'st it.", While to Heav'n his eyes he raised,
And thus exclaim'd, his sword he onward thrust;
The hov'ring Furies guide the reckless blow
To pierce the bosom of Eteocles,
Who falls. Upon his brother spouts his blood,
Who, seeing this, against his own breast turn'd
The bloody, smoking sword... I saw no more:
My senses, almost, at the cruel deed
Forsook me; thick mists swam before my eyes;
I fled, with tott'ring steps, and came to thee...—
Alas! O mother, what will be the end
Of this most fatal incident?...
*Joc.* 'Twill be,
Doubt not, one worthy of our family.—
Ah, leave the care of that to the fell rage,
The fury, of the persecuting gods.—
But who comes tow'rds us?... What do I behold?...
Dying Eteocles is hither borne...
*Ant.* His warriors on each side support his steps!...
*Joc.* Ah, with what death-like slowness he advances!
*Ant.* What see I? Polynices follows him!...

## Scene III.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, ANTIGONE, SOLDIERS OF ETEOCLES.

*Ant.* [*To Polynices.*] Ah! thou at least art safe . . .
*Pol.* Away: dost see not?
I am all cover'd with my brother's blood.
*Joc.* Ah wretch, ah fratricide, ah infamous! . . .
Dar'st thou approach the presence of a mother,
Whose son thou hast assassinated?
*Pol.* No.
I never thought that I again should be
Alive within thy presence; I had turn'd,
With a more furious hand against myself,
The weapon fatal to my brother's life . . .
*Joc.* But yet thou livest; vile one! . . .
*Ant.* Heav'ns! What life! . . .
*Pol.* Inopportunely Haemon grasp'd my hand,
And by main force disarm'd it of its sword.
P'rhaps cruel fate designs that I should be
By other hands transfix'd. If by thy hands,
Strike, mother, strike; behold my naked breast:
Why thus delay? I am no more thy son;
I, who deprived thee of another son . . .
*Joc.* Be silent now; disturb not any longer
Our parting moments.—O Eteocles; . . .
Dost thou not hear me? . . . dost not recognise
Her who now clasps thee to her tortured heart? . . .
It is thy mother; they are her warm tears,
Mix'd with thy blood, which thou feel'st trickling down
Thy face and gaping bosom. I beseech thee,
Once more thine eyelids open . . .
*Ete.* O my mother! . . .
Tell me; . . . am I in Thebes?
*Joc.* Within thy palace . . .
*Ete.* Speak; . . . do I die a king? . . . That traitor? . . . ah!
What do I see? Thou livest, and I . . . die? . . .
*Pol.* Thou shalt have all my blood; I have already
Devoted all that blood to pacify
Thy haughty and inexorable shade.

Dispel thy anger; thou thyself, thou knowest,
Soughtest thy death: with swift temerity
Thy bosom didst abandon to my sword.
Alas!... the fatal blow robs thee of life,
And (more than life) it robs me of my honor.
Grant me thy pardon ere the fault I punish,
Which baffles all attempt at reparation.
Now that that hatred I have merited,
The enmity of a vindictive brother,
I think there is no pang that equals it.
I swear I hate thee not; sight of thy blood,
The dreadful sight, has banish'd from my heart
All rancor... wretched that I am, I see
That thou'rt exasperated by my prayers.

*Ete.* Of what speak'st thou?... Thou, son of Œdipus,
Dost pardon ask of me? Dost dare to hope,
From one who springs from Œdipus, forgiveness?

*Joc.* O son, O son, do there in thy sick bosom
Such bitter passions dwell?

*Ete.* Within our breasts
The impious Furies have their throne erected:
I do not feel that mine have fled from me;
Nor though my blood is lost, that my foul veins
Of their inbred and cleaving hate are cleansed...
O impious agony!... atrocious rage!...
Livest thou yet? and hast thou conquer'd me?...
And shalt thou fill my throne?—make haste, O death,
That I may never see the madd'ning sight...

*Pol.* I ne'er will fill thy throne, again I swear it:
Descend in peace, then, to the Stygian stream.
Proud of thy regal chaplet, thou shalt go
To join thy sceptred and ancestral shades.
I will obsequiously attend thee thither,
Thy subject brother, a submissive shade.
O calm a little the fierce turbulence
Of that unconquerable mind! behold
Me at thy feet; thou, thou art still my lord.
Before I rush to death, I do conjure thee
To grant me pardon...

*Joc.* Thou shalt gain it; thou,
Eteocles, rise, rise above thy fate.

Ah, pardon him, and render him more guilty:
To his remorse thy sated vengeance leave...
*Ant.* And dost thou yet resist? O heart of steel!
By prayers, by agonies, art thou not moved,
Nor by the tears of desperation shed
By those thou most shouldst love?
*Joc.* My son, my son,
Refuse not to thy brother one embrace.
Short time remains: ah, from thy fame avert
Such stigma...
*Ete.* Mother, 'tis thy will?... 'tis well;...
I yield.—Come, then, O brother, to the arms
Of thy expiring brother, slain by thee...
Come,... and receive in this my last embrace...
Brother,... from me...[1] the death thou meritest.
*Joc.* O, treachery!
*Ant.* Sad sight!... O Polynices!...
*Pol.* Art thou now satisfied?...
*Ete.* I am revenged.—
I die, and still I hate thee...
*Pol.* I too die;...
And pardon thee.
*Joc.* —Behold the work complete:
These sons of incest, these unnatural brothers,
Murder each other: here behold a mother,
To whom there nothing now remains to lose.—
Ye gods, than us more guilty, from your skies
Crush me with all your bolts: or ye're no gods...—
But what do I behold?... Beneath my feet
Yawns there a terrible, immense abyss?...
*Ant.* My mother!...
*Joc.* Ah! I see them burst asunder,
Those black, interminable realms of death...
Thou lurid shade of Laius, dost thou stretch
To me thy arms? to a flagitious wife?...
What do I see? Thou show'st thy pierced breast?
With hands and face with clotted gore defiled,
Thou weepest, and dost cry out aloud for vengeance?—
Who made that horrid wound? what impious wretch?—

[1] Feigning to embrace him, he stabs him with a dagger.

'Twas Œdipus; thy son, whom, in thy bed,
Yet reeking with thy life-blood, I received.—
Who from another quarter beckons me?
I hear a noise which makes e'en Pluto tremble:
Behold the crash, the gleam, of warlike swords,
Sons of my son, my sons, ferocious shades,
Brothers, does strife e'en after death subsist?
O Laius, separate them!—But, behold,
Beside them stand the vile Eumenides!
Vengeful Alecto, I their mother am;
Rack thou, with that ensanguined, snaky scourge,
This form incestuous, which could being give
To such unheard-of monsters. Furies, why,
Ah why, delay?... I rush to meet you...
*Ant.* [1] Mother!...

[1] Antigone supports her; and Jocasta falls in her arms.

III.

# ANTIGONE.

## THE ARGUMENT.

THIS play is a continuation of *Polynices*, and follows in its main outline the history of Antigone as set forth in the immortal tragedy of Sophocles, rather than the version of Apollodorus. On the death of his two nephews Polynices and Eteocles, Creon seized upon the throne of Thebes, and ordered that no one should presume, under pain of death, to furnish to Polynices those burial rites which were indispensable to give peace to his shade, although he allowed Eteocles to be buried. Jocasta had killed herself shortly after the terrible catastrophe with which *Polynices* concludes; and Argeia, the widow of Polynices, not knowing of the cruel order of Creon, appears, hoping to be able to take back with her to Argos the urn containing her husband's ashes. Meanwhile Antigone is torn by contending emotions,—affection for her brother's memory, hatred of the tyrant Creon, and love for his son Haemon. She determines at any risk to perform the funeral rites for Polynices, and after a touching scene, she and Argeia, who had previously been strangers to each other, agree to fulfil together the loving but dangerous task.

Creon, not knowing his son's love for Antigone, reproaches Haemon for not rejoicing at his ascending the throne. Whilst they are speaking, Antigone and Argeia are brought before him in chains, for having disobeyed his commands. He condemns them to death, despite his son's intercession. Haemon then proclaims his love for

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Antigone, and Creon agrees to spare her life, if she will marry Haemon. She refuses, notwithstanding her love for him, to espouse the son of the virtual destroyer of her family and the usurper of the throne; nor can all of Haemon's entreaties move her from her purpose. Finally Creon commands her to be buried alive, and Argeia to be sent back to Argos, bearing the ashes of Polynices, in order to pacify the wrath of her father Adrastus. A tender parting takes place between her (carrying the urn) and Antigone. Creon, fearing a popular tumult, again changes his purpose, and orders Antigone to be put in prison, and there slain. His son enters to rescue her at the head of his followers; but the scene opens and her dead body is discovered, on seeing which Haemon kills himself.

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This fine tragedy is the first of several written by Alfieri, in which the unusually small number of four characters only appear. The whole plot turns on Antigone's fixed resolve to bury (or burn on the funeral pile) the body of Polynices. The love scenes between Antigone and Haemon are highly thought of by critics.

Alfieri states that he caused this tragedy to be performed in Rome, at the private theatre in the palace of the Spanish Ambassador, on November 20, 1782, before any of the four plays, of which it formed part, were printed, in order to ascertain if its extreme simplicity would be acceptable, and if four personages were sufficient for the success of such works. It was well received by the audience, who were much interested in the part of Argeia, the only one unnecessary for the action of the play. On this occasion Alfieri himself took the part of Creon, the Duke di Ceri that of Haemon, the Duchess di Ceri that of Argeia, and the majestic Duchess di Zagarolo the all-important *rôle* of Antigone. The author was of opinion that the fourth act was weak, and might have been left out altogether, if he had added a few verses to the third. He calls this a great defect, attributable half to the subject, and half to himself.

DEDICATION

TO

## FRANCESCO GORI GANDELLINI,

CITIZEN OF SIENNA.

It has not been possible for you to make an excursion hither, to see *Antigone* represented; *Antigone* therefore comes to find you: and I hope that this will redound to my better advantage; since, in reading the tragedy, you will see many things clearly, which perhaps might have escaped you in the representation. Hence, from your consummate judgment, I flatter myself to obtain (if I indeed deserve it) praise unadulterated by adulation; and blame, which will be my due in greater abundance, unadulterated by malice.

Be pleased, nevertheless, to accept this proof of my friendship; small compared to my esteem and love for you, but yet the greatest that I can demonstrate towards you.

Vittorio Alfieri.

Rome, *December* 8, 1782.

# ANTIGONE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| CREON. | ARGEIA. |
| ANTIGONE. | *Guards.* |
| HAEMON. | *Soldiers of Haemon.* |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Thebes.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ARGEIA.

*Ar.* Argeia, thou art now at last in Thebes . . .
After the rapid journey I need rest . . .
O how, as if by flight, I came from Argos!—
Faithful Menoetes, thou, infirm with age,
Couldst scarce keep pace with me: but yet I am
In Thebes. The shades of night a friendly aid
Lent to my enterprise; unseen I enter'd.—
This is the dreadful palace, of my spouse
Too well beloved, at once the tomb and cradle.
O Polynices! . . . thy insidious brother
Here, in thy blood, his thirst for vengeance sated.
Thy squalid shade, yet unavenged, still strays
Around these walls, and spurns sepulchral rites
In impious Thebes, so near thy cruel brother;
Methinks that Argos thou dost indicate . . .
To thee a sure asylum Argos was:
Ah, hadst thou never moved thy feet from thence! . . .
I come, I come, for thy most sacred dust.

Antigone alone, that faithful sister,
By thee so justly and so much beloved,
With pious hands can aid me to regain it.
O how I love her! O what soothing thoughts
Will give a transient softness to my grief,
In seeing, knowing, and embracing her!
Yes, here, with her, upon that gelid urn,
Which should belong to me, I come to weep;
It will be mine: a sister to a wife
Cannot refuse it.—Ah! our only child,
Behold the gift I bring thee back to Argos;
Thy sole inheritance; thy father's urn!—
But where does my incautious sorrow lead me?
Shall I, an Argive, be in Thebes, and not
Remember where I am?—I wait the hour
In which Antigone may venture forth . . .
How shall I know her? . . . And should I be seen? . . .
O Heav'ns! . . . 'tis now that I begin to tremble; . . .
Alone in Thebes . . . O! . . . heard I not a step?
Alas! . . . what shall I say? How find excuses? . . .
I will conceal myself.

## Scene II.

ANTIGONE.

*Ant.* —Mute is the palace;
The night is dark: quick; let me hence depart . . .
What? do I hesitate? and do my feet
Stagger beneath my weight? Why tremble thus?
Whence all this apprehension? Do I plan
Aught that is criminal? . . . or fear I death?—
I fear alone not to achieve my task.
O Polynices! O, belovèd brother,
Bewail'd till now in vain! . . . —The time is past
For tears alone; now is the time for action:
I feel myself superior to my sex:
Yes, on this day, in spite of cruel Creon,
Thou shalt receive from me funereal honors;
Yes, thou shalt now receive a sister's life,
Or from her hands the last sad obsequies.—
O Night, who on this spot, of light unworthy,

Shouldst reign eternally, O pall thyself
In thy most dense, impenetrable gloom,
To second thus my lofty purposes.
Conceal me from the vigilant espial
Of royal satellites; I hope in thee.—
Ye gods, if ye have not expressly sworn,
That, in this Thebes, no pious ceremony
Shall e'er be consummated, I but ask
So much of life as may ensure performance
To this one act of sisterly affection.—
Let me press forward: holy is the office:
A holy impulse urges me to action,
A lofty impulse of fraternal love . . .
But, who pursues me? Ah! I am betray'd . . .
A female comes to me? Who art thou? Answer.

## Scene III.

ARGEIA, ANTIGONE.

*Ar.* I am a child of woe.
*Ant.* What seekest thou
Within these thresholds at so late an hour?
*Ar.* I . . . seek . . . Antigone . . .
*Ant.* Why?—who art thou?
Know'st thou Antigone? To her art known?
What wantest thou with her? 'Twixt her and thee
What common int'rest?
*Ar.* That of grief and pity . . .
*Ant.* Pity? Dost dare pronounce that word in Thebes?
Know'st not that Creon reigns in Thebes? Perchance
Creon's a stranger to thee?
*Ar.* But few hours
I've been in Thebes . . .
*Ant.* Dost dare inside this palace,
By stealth, a stranger, introduce thyself? . . .
*Ar.* If in this palace I a stranger am,
It is the fault of Thebes: here I should not
Hear myself so accosted.
*Ant.* What say'st thou?
Where wert thou born?
*Ar.* In Argos.

*Ant.* Fatal name!
With horror it inspires me! Had it been
Always unknown to me, I had not lived
In everlasting tears.
*Ar.* If such distress
Argos in thee excites, Thebes causes me
An everlasting grief.
*Ant.* There is a tone
That moves me in thy accents. I would soothe
Thy grief by sympathy, if any grief
Except my own could move me: I should be
As much disposed to listen to thy tale,
As thou couldst be to tell it: but, alas!
Time now to me is wanting, who lament
A much-loved brother . . .
*Ar.* Ah! it must be she;
Antigone thou art . . .
*Ant.* . . . But . . . thou . . .
*Ar.* 'Tis she.
I am Argeia; the unhappy widow
Of thy most cherish'd brother.
*Ant.* Ah! . . . what hear I?
*Ar.* My only hope, my only consolation,
Belovèd sister, I at last embrace thee.—
Scarce hadst thou spoken, ere thy tones recall'd
The voice of Polynices: 'twas a sound
Inspiring boldness in my trembling heart,
And drew me from my hiding-place to meet thee . . .
How blest am I! . . . I find thee . . . Suffer me,
Ah, do thou grant, that, 'mid embraces kind,
To my long pent-up tears, upon thy bosom
I may, at last, give unrestrain'd indulgence.
*Ant.* —O how I tremble! Daughter of Adrastus,
Art thou in Thebes? within these guilty thresholds?
In Creon's pow'r? . . . O unexpected sight!
Sight not less dear than painful!
*Ar.* In this palace,
In which thou hoped'st to enjoy my presence,
And where I hoped for thine, is this thy welcome?
*Ant.* Dearer art thou to me, than any sister . . .
Ah, Polynices knew how much I loved thee:

To me, thy countenance alone was strange;
Thy manners, disposition, and thy heart,
Thy mighty love for him, I knew it all.
E'en as he loved, I loved thee: but I wish'd not,
Nor wish I now, to see thee here in Thebes . . .
A thousand fatal perils here surround thee.
*Ar.* Canst thou suppose me capable of fear,
Now that my Polynices is no more?
What is there left to lose, what to desire?
Let me once fold thee to my breast, and die.
*Ant.* Here thou may'st have a death unworthy of thee.
*Ar.* Die howsoe'er I may, if I but die
Upon the tomb of my beloved husband,
That death will be most worthy, and most welcome.
*Ant.* What is it that thou say'st? . . . Alas! . . . His tomb? . . .
To him, who was thy husband and my brother,
A little dust to cover his dead body
In Thebes, within his very palace gates,
Is interdicted.
*Ar.* But the lifeless corpse? . . .
*Ant.* Lies on the plain, exposed to beasts of prey . . .
*Ar.* I'll seek the plain.
*Ant.* Ah, check thy eagerness!—
Creon, the wicked Creon, puff'd with pride
From the possession of the throne usurp'd,
Braves fearlessly the laws, the ties of nature,
And, more than these, the gods; not satisfied
With interdicting from the sons of Argos
All sepulture, a cruel death awaits
Those who presume to give to them a tomb.
*Ar.* My spouse a prey to wild beasts on the plain? . . .
And through that very plain e'en now I pass'd! . . .
And thou hast left him there? . . . Now the sixth day
Dawns since he fell transfix'd by his fierce brother;
And uninterr'd, and naked there he lies?
His bones by force from his paternal palace
Excluded? and a mother suffers it? . . .
*Ant.* Beloved Argeia, thou dost not yet know
The whole of our unparallel'd misfortunes.—
No sooner had Jocasta seen accomplish'd

The horrid fratricide, (ah, wretched one!)
She shed no tears, nor made the air resound
With loud laments: unutterable grief
Palsied all speech, all natural emotion;
Her stony eye-balls, motionless and dry,
Upon the ground she fix'd: and from Avernus,
The shades of murder'd Laius, of her sons,
Stabb'd interchangeably each by the other,
With a tremendous vehemence she summon'd.
They rose before her eyes; for a long time,
Upon the spectral visions it had raised,
Her madden'd phantasy did strangely feed
With eager passion: thus she struggled long,
And mid reiterated throes of anguish,
At last regain'd her reason; by her side
She saw her matrons, and her wretched daughter.
She was resolved to die, but spake it not;
And thus she feign'd, the better to delude us . . .
Incautious as I was, I was deluded:
I ought not to have left her.—She made show
Of wishing to give nature the repose
It so much wanted; I indulged her wish,
And from her side departed: she had snatch'd
The sword, from the yet palpitating side
Of Polynices; with more promptitude,
Than I can tell it thee, in her own breast
Plunged it; and fell, and breath'd her latest sigh.—
And I, why do I live? . . . The impure remnant
Of such an impure race, I also ought
To plunge the same sword in my lonely heart;
But pity seized me for my sightless father,
My wretched father, neither dead nor living.
For him have I endured the light abhorr'd;
And for his trembling age preserve myself . . .

*Ar.* For Œdipus? . . . On him should rather fall,
On him alone, the horror of his crimes.
Does he then live? and Polynices die?

*Ant.* Ah, wretched Œdipus! Hadst thou but seen him!
He of our Polynices is the sire;
And pangs, e'en greater than his fault, he suffers.
Laden with sorrow, indigent, and blind,

A banish'd man, a wanderer, he goes
From Thebes. The tyrant dared to drive him thence,
Ah, wretched Œdipus! to tell his name
He will not venture: on our hated heads,
On Creon, Thebes, and even on the gods,
Blasphemous imprecations he will heap.—
I had decreed myself to be the prop
Of his blind, vacillating feebleness;
But I was torn from him by force; and here
Constrain'd to stay: 'twas p'rhaps the gods' decree;
For scarcely had my father left the city,
When Creon the unheard-of prohibition
Touching the sepulture of those who're slain
Promulgated. And who, except myself,
In Thebes, had ventured to defy its penance?

*Ar.* Who, if not I, should share with thee the toil?
Here Heav'n impell'd me wisely. To obtain
From thee the honor'd relics I came hither:
Beyond my hope, I here arrive in time
To see again, and to my bosom clasp
That form adored; to wash with my warm tears
That execrable wound; to pacify,
With rites funereal, the unquiet shade . . .
Why do we longer tarry? Sister, come . . .

*Ant.* Yes, to this holy office let us go;
But go, like victims, to appointed death:
I ought to do it, and I wish to die:
I've nothing in the world except my father,
And he is torn from me; death I expect,
And death I wish for.—Leave me to construct,
Thou, who shouldst life still prize, that funeral pile,
Which will unite me with my much-loved brother.
E'en while he lived his soul and mine were one:
And may one flame consume our forms, and leave
One undistinguishable heap of dust.

*Ar.* And ought not I to die? What dost thou say?
Dost thou thus wish to conquer me in grief?
Equals we were in love; do I say equals?
No, mine was most profound. Ah, deeper far
Is a wife's love than that of any sister.

*Ant.* Argeia, I will not dispute with thee

About our love; thy death I will oppose.
Thou art a widow; what a husband thou
Hast lost, I know: but thou, like me, of incest
Art not the fruit; thou hast a mother still;
Like mine, thy father is not blind, or outcast;
Nor—worse than all of these—a guilty father.
The more propitious gods to thee have given
No brothers, who have emulously bathed
Each in the other's blood their murd'rous swords.
Take not offence, if I would die alone;
Ere I was born, my life was forfeited.
Return to Argos . . . Hast thou not forgotten?
Thou still hast there a living pledge of love;
There, in thy child, thou hast the living image
Of Polynices: ah! return to Argos;
Rejoice the heart of thy despairing father,
Who knows not where thou art; go, I conjure thee:
No eye hath seen thee on these thresholds yet;
Yet thou hast time. Leave me alone to brave
The fatal prohibition.

*Ar.* . . . Ah, my son? . . .
I love him; yes, I love him; but wouldst thou
That I should fly, if death is here decreed
For Polynices? Thou misjudgest me.—
Adrastus will protect my little one;
To him will be a father. I, alas!
Should bring him up in tears; while he should be
To courage and to vengeance disciplined.—
There is no threat, no terror, that can scare me
From the beholding his belovèd corpse.
My Polynices, shall another yield thee
The last commemorative obsequies? . . .

*Ant.* Wilt yield thy neck, then, to the Theban axe?

*Ar.* It is the crime that makes the infamy,
And not the punishment. The infamy
Will fall on Creon, should we be condemn'd:
All will feel horror when they hear his name,
Pity when they hear ours . . .

*Ant.* And wilt thou take
From me such glory?

*Ar.* I will see my husband;

And die upon his bosom.—Tell me, sister,
What right hast thou my right to controvert?
Thou, who didst see him die, and livest yet . . .
*Ant.* Now I believe thee equal to myself.
At first, I felt myself, against my will,
Constrain'd to ascertain what female fears
Might in thy bosom lurk: I doubted not
The depth of thy affection, but thy courage.
*Ar.* Who is not made courageous by despair?
But, if I merited thy brother's love,
Could I in thought, or action, be ignoble?
*Ant.* Pardon me, sister: truly do I love thee;
I tremble; and thy destiny alarms me.
But thou'rt determined? Let us then depart.
With the devoted race of Œdipus
May Heav'n confound thee not!—The night appears
More black than usual: certainly the gods
For us have darken'd it. Take special care,
Sister, to check thy tears; more than aught else
They would betray us. The vile satellites
Of Creon rigorously guard the plain:
To them may nought betray us, till the flames
Consuming the dear lifeless body, blaze.
*Ar.* I will not weep; . . . but thou, . . . wilt thou not weep?
*Ant.* We will weep silently.
*Ar.* Art thou inform'd
On what part of the plain his body lies?
*Ant.* Let us depart: I know where it was thrown
By Creon's impious mercenaries. Come.
Lugubrious torches I will take with me:
Some sparks with which to light them, we will there
From flint elicit.—Hence, without delay!
Silently bold accompany my steps.

## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

CREON, HAEMON.

*Cre.* But what? Thou only in my joy, O son,
Takest no part? Thy father thou beholdest
Upon the throne of Thebes; he has secured
The sceptre as thy firm inheritance.
Whence, then, these lamentations? Dost thou grieve
For Œdipus, or for his wicked race?

*Haem.* Does my compassion, then, for Œdipus,
And his descendants, seem to thee a crime?
To me, from out the throne there issued not,
On that dark day on which thou didst ascend it,
Such an auspicious and absorbing radiance,
As to prevent all grief from finding entrance.
Thou, p'rhaps, one day mayst bitterly repent
The acquisition of the Theban sceptre.

*Cre.* I rather should repent, if need there were
Of penitence, that, for so long a time,
I had submissive been to guilty nephews,
Flagitious children of incestuous parents.
But if they have, for their atrocious birth,
By a still more atrocious death atoned,
Let everlasting silence be their doom.
Scarce is their destiny fulfill'd, when, lo!
O'er Thebes the day-star more benignly rises,
The air is more serene, the gods themselves
Regard us more propitiously: ah, yes,
I feel exulting hope of better days.

*Haem.* All expectation, but of wretchedness,
Is baffled by the' event, amid the ruin
And death of those to whom, by ties of blood,
We are most closely join'd. A king of Thebes,
(For king of Thebes he still must be accounted)
Œdipus, exiled, blind, and fugitive,
To universal and astonish'd Greece,
Presents a spectacle ne'er seen before:
Two brothers, murd'rers of each other; brothers
Of their own sire; sons of incestuous mother,

Sister to thee, and by her own hands slain:
Thou see'st a horrid mixture of all names;
A horrid chaos of distress and slaughter.
Behold the auspices, behold the track,
By which thou hast ascended to the throne.
Ah, father! canst thou possibly be joyful?
*Cre.* Œdipus, only, by remaining longer
On this contaminated spot, had given
A signal to the vengeance of the gods;
It was our duty to get rid of him.—
But thou hast not, without omission, stated
All our afflictions. Impious Œdipus!
O, what hast thou not cost me? I, too, shed
Tears for a son beloved; thy elder brother,
Menæceus; he, in whom the foolish frauds,
The lying, and pernicious prophecies,
Of a Tiresias, credence did obtain:
Menæceus, to self-sacrifice devoted,
To save his country, by self-murder slain,
While Œdipus yet lives? Perpetual exile
Is a light vengeance for his many crimes.—
But let him bear with him to other shores,
That which will follow him where'er he goes,
The malediction of the angry gods.
Our tears will not undo what has been done;
'Tis now our duty to forget the past,
And to grasp fortune, while we may, by force.
*Haem.* Unstable goddess, to secure her smiles
I'll not compel my heart. O father, fear,
For there is cause, the anger of the gods.
Ah, suffer me to speak to thee with freedom.
Thy cruel prohibition, that prevents
The haughty and unburied shades of Greece
From passing Acheron, will wake their vengeance.
What art thou doing? With prosperity,
And with a throne, elated, know'st thou not
That Polynices boasts a royal birth,
Sprung from a mother who to thee was sister?
And yet he lies dishonor'd on the plain:
At least permit, that the unburied corpse,
Of him, who is thy nephew, may be burnt.

Ah, to the sad Antigone, who sees
Of all her family the final slaughter,
The body yield of her belovèd brother.
*Cre.* As were her impious brothers, is not she
Of Œdipus the offspring?
*Haem.* As 'twas theirs,
The throne of Thebes by heritage is hers.
Thou surely need'st not scruple for a kingdom
To barter a dead body.
*Cre.* She's my foe . . .
*Haem.* Believe it not.
*Cre.* She loveth Polynices,
Her father too; she then abhorreth Creon.
*Haem.* Wouldst thou, O Heav'ns! that she should then not feel,
Or for her father, or her brother, pity?
P'rhaps, if she were inhuman, she would gain
A more distinguish'd place in thy esteem?
*Cre.* Not more esteem, but, maybe, less of hatred.—
A monarch should forestall another's hate;
And deem each man offended, as a foe.—
I have from fierce Antigone removed
Ev'ry pretext, in banishing her father.
Had they together both in exile gone,
They might have found, as wanderers, a king,
Who, under the affected veil of pity,
Conceal'd a wish his empire to augment;
And who, in their defence, might come to Thebes,
As did Adrastus, arm'd.—I hear thee blame
My prohibition, son, to which by motives
Of lofty policy, to thee unknown,
I was impell'd. Hereafter thou wilt learn them;
And thou wilt see, that, though it may appear
A cruel law, 'twas indispensable.
*Haem.* The cause unknown to me, dost thou assert?
I fear that thou dost the effects ignore.
Yes, for her exiled father, for her throne
Usurp'd unjustly, for the' unburied corpse
Of Polynices, without seeking it,
Antigone in Thebes may find revenge.
The people, by thy prohibition stung,

Murmur, and rail at it without disguise;
They long for its evasion; and, at length,
Will openly infringe it.
*Cre.* Be it so;
It is my wish; that I may have the life
Of him who first may venture to infringe it.
*Haem.* Ah! what fierce enemy can counsel thee
Thus to contribute to thy own destruction?
*Cre.* —My love for thee is my sole counsellor:
Of what thou blamest, thou shalt reap the fruit.
Long have the citizens in Thebes been wont
To witness crimes of darker hue than these;
What can they now intend, but to submit
And to be silent?
*Haem.* Oft beneath such silence
Vengeance lies couch'd . . .
*Cre.* The silence of the few;
But in a people's universal silence
Fear hidden lies, and abject servitude.—
Cease now, O son, to thwart thy father's views.
No object of solicitude have I
More dear, or more important, than thyself;
Thou only now remain'st to me; thou only
Shalt reap the fruits of my anxieties.
P'rhaps thou intendest, ere his days are spent,
To prove thyself ungrateful to thy father? . . .
But whence this clank of fetters and of arms? . . .
*Haem.* Ah, who advances? . . . In hard fetters bound
Two women dragg'd along? . . . Antigone! . . .
*Cre.* The' incautious one has fallen in my snares;
'Twill be not easy for her to escape.

## Scene II.

*Guards, with Torches.*

ANTIGONE, ARGEIA, CREON, HAEMON.

*Cre.* What is the crime these damsels have committed?
*Ant.* I will declare it.
*Cre.* Let them be conducted
A little further.

*Ant.* In thy sight behold me,
Mine own accuser. I've defied thy laws:
On the funereal pile I've burn'd my brother.
*Cre.* And thou shalt have from me the promised guerdon.—
But thou, whose face I do not recognise,
Thou, whose attire bespeaks thee here a stranger,
Who art thou? Speak...
*Ar.* The rival of her virtue.
*Haem.* Ah, father, calm thy anger! female boldness
Deserves not the resentment of a king.
*Cre.* Resentment? What say'st thou, misdeeming youth!
An unperturbèd judge I listen to them:
Death is already theirs: let this strange lady
First tell her name; and then they both shall have
The challenged retribution.
*Ant.* I alone
Will have that retribution. On the plain
I found this lady; it was I that show'd
To her my brother's corpse; by Heav'n conducted,
Thy satellites' unwary vigilance
I baffled: and invited her to aid me
In such a holy office;—she complied,
And with her hand a little help afforded.
I know not who she is; in Thebes ne'er saw her;
Perchance she is from Argos, and intended
To' embrace, but not to burn, some of her friends
Who in the battle fell...
*Ar.* Now, now, indeed,
Should I be guilty, and should well deserve
The direst punishment, if, urged by fear,
I dared to disavow a deed so sacred.—
Flagitious king! learn then my name; exult,
And triumph, when thou hear'st it...
*Ant.* Ah! be silent...
*Ar.* Adrastus' daughter; Polynices' spouse;
I am Argeia.
*Haem.* What is this I hear?
*Cre.* O worthy pair! ye are by Heav'n deliver'd
Into my hands: of its just punishment
Has Heav'n now chosen me the minister.—

But, gentle lady, hast thou not brought with thee
The tender pledge of thy too transient love?
For thou art mother of a little heir
Of Thebes; where is he? he can also boast
The blood of Œdipus: Thebes longs to see him.
*Haem.* O! I am horror-struck... to hear thee, shudder...
Thou, who hast lost a son, dar'st thou with jeers
Thus to inflame a wretched mother's woe?
One mourns a husband; one a brother mourns;
And thou canst mock them? 'tis too horrible!
*Ant.* O thou too worthy son for such a father!
Do not degrade us with thy intercession:
Where Creon reigns, to be adjudged to death,
Is a sure proof of lofty innocence.
*Cre.* Pour out, pour out, thy impotent upbraidings;
For they offend not me: thou art most welcome,
So as thou hast it, to make light of death.
*Ar.* On me turn all thy rage; on none but me.
Hither I came alone, unknown to all,
By stealth: an entrance in these thresholds gain'd
By night, on purpose to defy thy laws.
The bosom of Antigone, 'tis true,
Swell'd with suppress'd resentment; she revolved
A thousand schemes; but silently she bore
The horrid prohibition; and had never,
Had I not hither come, incurr'd its penance.
He is the criminal that plans the crime:
On the contriver falls the penalty...
*Ant.* Ah, trust her not: inopportune compassion,
Vain generosity, her words inspire.
That she, by stealth, these thresholds cross'd, is true,
But then she knew not thy despotic law:
She sought me here; all timidly and trembling,
She, at my hands, required the fatal urn
Of her belovèd lord. Hence, 'tis apparent
The fame of thy inhuman prohibition
Had not reach'd Argos. I do not pretend
That she did hate thee not as well as I;
(Who does not hate thee?) but she fear'd thee more:
She hoped to be invisible to thee,
(Too credulous, alas!) and fly from hence

With the possession of the sacred ashes,
And back to Argos bear the dear remains.—
Not these my hopes, who, from the first conception
Of this design, aspired to be thy victim,
And to be summon'd thus to brave thy presence;
To be there I exult; and tell thee now
That much as she, nay more than she, I hate thee;
That I, the unextinguishable flame
Of hatred and revenge, with which I burn,
Into her breast transfused; mine is the pride,
Mine is the hardihood; and all the rage
With which she now invests herself, is mine.

*Cre.* Perfidious pair! in vain each strives to prove
Herself proficient most in infamy.
I soon shall show to you, betwixt you two,
Which is the vilest. Death, most infamous,
Such as is fitting, waits you both; ah! then
Another rivalship of tears, and prayers,
And groans, will ye exhibit . . .

*Haem.* O my father!
To death most infamous? . . . That cannot be;
Thou wilt not do it, no. To mitigate
Thy bitter vengeance, if compassion may not,
Reflection may constrain thee. Of Adrastus,
A potent king, Argeia is the daughter:
Thou hast had proof Adrastus knows the way
To Thebes, and he may visit us once more.

*Cre.* Then, ere Adrastus visit us once more,
Argeia shall be immolated.—What?
Dost think by fear to make me pity feel?

*Ar.* Adrastus cannot now return to Thebes;
The heav'ns, the times, to him are unpropitious;
His troops, his treasures, and his arms, exhausted,
He cannot now avenge me. Fear not, Creon!
Slay me, ah, slay me; and it will not be
That now Adrastus can chastise thee for it.
Yes, be Argeia slain; since to her slayer
No consequence of evil can ensue:
But spare, ah, spare Antigone; for her,
And in her cause, by thousands and by thousands,
Daring avengers will arise in Thebes . . .

*Ant.* Ah cease, O sister! do not thus misjudge
The tyrant thou accostest: he is cruel:
But not by chance, or to no purpose, cruel.
I now have hopes for thee; I see already
That I suffice for him, and I exult.
He wills to have the throne, thou hast it not:
But, by ill-omen'd right, that very throne,
Which he desires, which he usurps, is mine.
Ambition points me out, and me alone,
To be his victim . . .

*Cre.* Thine, say'st thou, this throne?
Infamous progeny of incest, death,
And not a kingdom, is your heritage.
Did not thy impious brothers prove this truth,
The murd'rers of each other?

*Ant.* Impious thou,
Impious and vile, who to the deed of death
Didst goad them on by fraudulent contrivance.—
If 'twas our crime to be our brother's children,
It was our punishment to call thee uncle.
Thou wast the author of the guilty war;
Thou the fomenter of fraternal hate;
Thou artfully didst fan the angry flame;
One thou didst instigate, the other flatter,
And both thou didst betray. And by such arts
Thou clear'dst the way to infamy and throne.

*Haem.* Art thou determined on thine own destruction?

*Ant.* I am determined, that, for once at least,
The tyrant shall hear truth. Not one I see
Around him that dare speak it to him.—O!
If thou the agonies of thy remorse,
As thou the tongues of all mankind, couldst silence;
How perfect then, O Creon, were thy joy!
But even more so than thou art to others,
To thyself hateful, in thy restless eye,
Thy restless and thy circumspective glances,
Both crime and punishment are legible.

*Cre.* There was no need of fraudulent contrivance
To goad to death the' abominable brothers
Of their own father: all the angry gods
Were emulous to hasten on that death.

*Ant.* Why dost thou name the gods? No god hast thou,
Except the Useful for thyself alone;
To this omniv'rous deity, thy friends,
Thy son, thy fame itself, if this thou hadst,
Thou hold'st thyself prepared to immolate.
*Cre.* Hast thou aught else to say to me?—Thou know'st
That diverse off'rings diverse gods appease.
Thou art a victim to the gods of Hell:
The last, and worthy of thy impious race.
*Haem.* Father, suspend a little the fulfilment
Of the dread sentence. I first ask of thee
A transient audience, to communicate
To thee some matters of the last importance . . .
*Cre.* Part of the night these women have disturb'd
Remains as yet unspent. I have determined,
Within myself, the moment of her doom;
Soon as the sun arises I will hear thee . . .
*Ar.* Alas! thou speakest only of my sister?
Now, truly do I tremble. Wilt thou not
Condemn me with Antigone to death?
*Cre.* No more delay: let them be both confined
Within the horrors of the darkest dungeon . . .
*Ar.* Together, sister, we will go . . .
*Ant.* Ah! . . . yes . . .
*Cre.* They shall be separated.—I myself
Will be the keeper of Antigone:
Let us depart.—Guards, to another dungeon
Consign Argeia.
*Haem.* O too horrible! . . .
*Ant.* Let us begone.
*Ar.* Alas, unhappy I! . . .
*Haem.* I will, at any rate, pursue their steps.

## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

CREON, HAEMON.

*Cre.* I am prepared to give thee audience now.
Thou saidst, O son, that I from thee should hear
Matters of import high; at the same time
Thou mayst, perchance, from my lips hear the same.
*Haem.* A suppliant I approach thee: to confront
The first and fierce emotions of thy wrath
I deem'd unwise: now that it somewhat yields
To reason's influence, come I, though alone,
The organ of the Theban multitude,
Thee to conjure, O father, to use pity.
Wilt thou refuse me this indulgence, father?
The pious women have infringed thy law;
But who would not have broken such an edict? . . .
*Cre.* Who, but thyself, would dare to intercede
For those who have defied it?
*Haem.* Nor dost thou
Deem in thy heart their sacred enterprise
Worthy of death; ah no! I think thee not
Unnatural and so unjust; nor art thou.
*Cre.* Thebes and my son may call me at their will
Cruel, I am contented to be just.
To' obey all laws, whate'er those laws may be,
All are alike required: to Heav'n alone
Are kings accountable for what they do;
And there is neither age, nor rank, nor sex,
That palliates the audacious turpitude
Of incomplete obedience. To permit
A few delinquents to remain unpunish'd
Gives license to the many.
*Haem.* Didst thou deem,
When thou didst frame thy law, that two such ladies
Would be the first its penance to defy?
A wife, a sister, emulously both
Rising above their sex? . . .
*Cre.* Hear me, O son;
From thee I ought not any thing to hide.—
Or thou know'st not, or thou will'st not to know,

Or thou pretendest not to fathom them;
I therefore will explain my plans to thee.—
I thought, I hoped; what do I say? by force
I would constrain Antigone alone
To be the first in Thebes to break my law;
At last I have obtain'd my heart's desire;
Antigone has fallen in the snare;
The useless law may now be abrogated . . .

*Haem.* O Heav'ns! . . . and thou, art thou indeed my father? . . .

*Cre.* Ungrateful son; . . . or dull of apprehension;
For such my love would fain account thee yet:
I am thy father: if thou hold me guilty,
I am so for thy sake.

*Haem.* I clearly see
The execrable means by which thou hopest
My fortunes to advance.—Disastrous throne!
Thou never shalt be mine, if, by such means,
Thou art to be obtain'd.

*Cre.* I fill that throne;
That throne is mine which thou rejectest thus.—
If to a father, as becomes a son,
Thou canst not speak, speak to him as thy king.

*Haem.* Unhappy I! . . . my father, . . . pardon; . . . hear; . . .
Thou wilt not reap the fruit of such a plot,
And wilt degrade thy name. Absolute power,
E'en in the king most absolute, avails not
To drown the cry of universal nature.
All feel compassion for the pious virgin:
Thy schéme will be discover'd by the Thebans;
Discover'd and abhorr'd, perchance not suffer'd.

*Cre.* Dost dare to welcome first the impious doubt,
The doubt by all men hitherto unspoken,
Whether or not my will should be obey'd?
Save from my will, my arbitrary power
Disdains to hear of limit or control.
Thou hast not taught me how to wield the sceptre.
I soon shall make in ev'ry Theban heart
All passions dumb, excepting only fear.

*Haem.* My intercessions, then, are unavailing?
My fond reliance that thou wouldst relent? . . .

*Cre.* Utterly vain.

*Haem.* The progeny of kings,
Two ladies, then, to cruel death are doom'd,
Since, at their hands, due rites of sepulture
A brother, and a husband, has received?
*Cre.* One is thus doom'd.—The other's fate but little
Imports; as yet I know it not.
*Haem.* Me then,
Me then with her shalt thou consign to death.
Hear, father, hear; I love Antigone;
Long have I loved her; loved her more than life.
And ere thou tear'st Antigone from me,
Thou wilt be forced to take away my life.
*Cre.* Thou wicked son! . . . Thus dost thou love thy father?
*Haem.* I swear I love thee, e'en as her I love.
*Cre.* Vexatious hindrance!—In thy father's heart
Thou hast infix'd an unexpected wound,
A mortal wound. Thy love will fatal be
To my repose, to thine, and to the fame
And glory of us both! The world holds not
Aught precious in my sight compared to thee . . .
Too much I love thee, herein lies my crime . . .
Is this thy recompense for such affection?
Thou lovest her, entreatest for her safety,
Who mocks my pow'r, who holds me in contempt,
And dares to tell me so; and in her breast
Conceals ambitious wishes for the throne?
This throne, the source of my solicitude,
Because thou mayst one day inherit it.
*Haem.* Thou art mistaken: in her pious breast,
I swear, there lives not one ambitious thought:
No other thoughts find entrance to thy heart.
Hence thou know'st not, nor canst thou ever know,
The mighty pow'r of love, against whose onslaughts
Reason imposes but a feeble check.
Thou didst not always deem Antigone
Thy enemy, yet have I always loved her:
To change, with change of circumstance, my love,
Was more than human nature could perform:
I could be silent, and I held my peace;
Nor, hadst thou not constrain'd me, should I now,

O father, have reveal'd my secret fondness.—
O Heav'ns! must she her virgin neck lay down
To the vile axe? . . . and must I suffer it? . . .
Must I behold it?—Couldst thou contemplate
With a less haughty and less clouded eye
Her noble heart, her elevated thoughts,
Her qualities, as rare as they're sublime,
Thou, even as thy son, yea, more than he,
At once wouldst rev'rence and admire her virtues.
Who dared, beneath the cruel sway in Thebes
Of fierce Eteocles, appear the friend
Of Polynices? She alone dared do it.
In whom, except in her, did her blind father,
By all deserted, find a pitying friend?
Lastly, Jocasta, then held dear by thee,
By birth thy sister,—in her grief immense,
Afflicted mother, say, what other source
Of comfort had she left? In all her tears
What solace, what companion, did she find?
What daughter had she, but Antigone?—
Thou say'st she is the child of Œdipus?
But, for a crime in which she bore no part,
Her virtues make a plenary atonement.—
Again I say, the throne is not her object:
Never, O never, hope to see me happy
At her expense: O were she so at mine!
I would not only give the throne of Thebes,
But that of all the world to make her so.

*Cre.* —Does she return thy love with equal love?

*Haem.* There is no love that can compare with mine.
She loves me not; nor can she ever love me:
If she detest me not, it is enough
To satisfy my heart; I hope no more:
To seek more from her heart, who ought to hate me,
Would be unreasonable.

*Cre.* Tell me further,
Would she consent to give to thee her hand?

*Haem.* A royal virgin, from whom have been torn,
And torn by impious violence, her brothers,
Her mother, and her father, shall she give
Her hand in marriage? give it, too, to me

Sprung from a blood that's fatal to her race?
Could I be so presumptuous? Creon's son,
Could I dare offer her my hand? . . .
*Cre.* Thou mayst;
Thy hand at once restores her life and throne.
*Haem.* Too well I know her; and too much I love her:
Foster'd in weeping, more than ever now
She spends her life in tears. Perchance hereafter
She may see days less tragical than these,
And may feel less aversion to my love;
Thou mayest then . . .
*Cre.* Thou vainly dost expect
That I should put our destiny in wardship
To time, and to its all-precarious issues.—
Guards, quickly be Antigone brought forth
Into my presence.—She deserves to die;
I may, with justice, sentence her to death;
And, p'rhaps, 'twould be in me a proof of wisdom,
With present rigor to inflict that sentence . . .
But yet, my son, thou art so dear to me,
That, for thy sake alone, I will consent
To grant her life, to take her as my daughter,
If she consent to yield to thee her hand.
And can she hesitate to make a choice
Betwixt a scaffold and a monarch's son?
*Haem.* Hesitate? no! She instant death will choose.
*Cre.* She hates thee then.
*Haem.* She loves her own too well.
*Cre.* I understand thee. Thou desirest, son,
That I should life preserve in her, who would,
If she had pow'r, take life from me and mine?
Canst thou presume to ask so great a boon
Of a fond father who so much doth love thee?

## Scene II.

ANTIGONE, CREON, HAEMON, GUARDS.

*Cre.* Approach: thou findest me, Antigone,
Much more disposed to favor than before.
Not that I deem thy enterprise less guilty,
Or the annex'd infliction less thy due:

Paternal love, more than the love of justice,
Hath wrought this change. My son, most fervently,
Hath ask'd for thee my pardon, and obtain'd it,
Provided that thou pledge thyself . . .
*Ant.* To what?
*Cre.* To give him, in my sight, without delay,
A recompense he well deserves, . . . thy hand.
*Haem.* Pardon, Antigone; I never ask'd
So great a blessing: he would give thee to me:
I wish alone to rescue thee from death.
*Cre.* On this condition thou obtain'st my pardon.
*Ant.* Does Creon offer kindness?—Ah! to me
What kindness can he show so great as death?
Death can alone eternally remove me
From thy detested sight: thou makest happy
Those whom thou thus dost banish from thy presence.—
Haemon, obtain my death; 'twill be a pledge,
The only one I can accept, of love.
Ah! recollect, O Haemon, that it is
The richest gift a tyrant can bestow;
Which often he denies to those whose hearts
Possess a real, ardent wish to have it . . .
*Cre.* Wilt thou not alter thy deportment tow'rds me?
Wilt thou be always proud, implacable,
Whether thou art condemn'd, or art absolved?
*Ant.* Change my deportment? . . . 'twere more possible
For thee to change thy heart.
*Haem.* This is my father:
If thou, Antigone, wilt thus address him,
Thou piercest my sad heart.
*Ant.* He is thy father;
Hence all the worth he has; nor do I find
Any defect, O Haemon, in thy nature,
But that thou art his son.
*Cre.* Peace; clemency
In me was transient as the lightning's flash;
Already thou'rt superfluously guilty;
Thy further words of no avail can be . . .
*Ant.* The throne, incontrovertibly my right,
Which thou usurpest, makes me too, too guilty.
That throne I do not ask of thee, nor life.
The day on which thou took'st my father from me,

I should have ask'd of thee the gift of death,
Or, with my own hands, on myself bestow'd it;
But I had still my brother to entomb.
Now that I have that holy task accomplish'd,
Nothing remains for me to do in Thebes:
If thou dost wish my life, restore my father.

*Cre.* I offer thee the throne; and, with that throne,
A spouse thou hatest not; who loves thee more,
Antigone, than thou abhorrest me;
Who loves thee more, far more, than his own father.

*Ant.* Haemon, and he alone, if not more dear,
Perchance might make my life more bearable.—
But what a life 'twould be! a life dragg'd on
Where thou wert present! while I still must hear,
Hear from Avernus, the' unavenged shades
Of my dead brothers, whom thou didst betray,
And goad to murder, cry to me for vengeance?
Can I, a wife, hear this, and tranquilly
Repose in the embraces of the son
Of the destroyer of my family? . . .

*Cre.* I comprehend thy meaning. The alliance
Would doubtless be too chaste: if there had been
Another son of Œdipus! 'twere he
Thou wouldst deem worthy thy illustrious hand . . .

*Ant.* Daughter of Œdipus, ah, horrid name!—
Daughter-in-law of Creon only worse!

*Haem.* My hope, I see, has too presumptuous been!
Blood can alone appease your bitter hate:
Choose then my blood; spill mine.—Antigone,
Thy stern refusal doth become thee well:
Father, in thee, is anger also just:
I love you both, both equally I love;
Myself alone it is that I must hate.—
Wouldst thou, O Creon, sentence her to death?
Permit that she deserve it at thy hands,
By murdering thy son.—Antigone,
Thou wishest on my sire to wreak thy vengeance?
Strike; in this breast thou wilt obtain it fully:
In me, his only, his beloved son,
Thou takest from him: childless thou wilt make him;
Than Œdipus more wretched. Why delay?

Strike; by insulting thus my father, thou
Dost much more wound than if thou stabb'd my breast.
*Cre.* Do not yet utterly despair; her words
Bespeak less grief than anger.—Lady, yield
To reason: in thy hands alone is placed
Thy destiny; on thee alone depends
Argeia, whom thou lov'st so much, for whom,
Far more than for thyself, thou art afflicted;
Of Haemon, whom thou dost not hate, thou art
The arbitress; . . . of me thou also art;
Whom, if thou dost abhor beyond all duty,
No less thou oughtest to confess, that I,
Beyond all duty, am to thee indulgent.—
This day, that now doth usher in its light,
I yield to thee for thy mature reflection:—
At sun-set, death or Haemon thou must choose.

## Scene III.

ANTIGONE, HAEMON, GUARDS.

*Ant.* Ah! why wert thou the son of Creon born?
Or why, at least, dost not resemble him? . . .
*Hdem.* Ah, hear me.—On this instant, which I feel
To be the last of real life to me,
I fain would speak to thee my inmost thoughts:
Erewhile my father's savage looks restrain'd me.—
Then know, for my excuse, that I'm the first
To praise, and to appreciate, and admire,
Thy stern refusal, and thy sterner anger.
Rather than dare to offer it to thee,
By a slow fire would I consume this hand;
This hand, which seems to me unworthy of thee,
More than it seems to thee. Thou knowest well
That I do love thee; and thou shalt know well
That I esteem thee.—But meanwhile, (ah, state
Of anguish inexpressible!) my life
Suffices not to place thy life in safety! . . .
O that, at least, a death not infamous
I could obtain for thee! . . .
*Ant.* A death in Thebes,
Far more opprobrious e'en than mine can be,

Fell to my mother's and my brothers' lot.
The axe to me seems almost like a triumph.
*Haem.* What dost thou speak of? ... ah, atrocious sight!
I will not see it: will not live to see it.—
But hear me, O Antigone! P'rhaps yet
The king might be deluded ... I speak not,
Thou wouldst not suffer me, nor would I do it,
To recommend aught of thy fame unworthy ...
*Ant.* I brave, but I delude not, e'en a tyrant;
And this thou knowest, Haemon. Piety,
Fraternal piety, to artifice
Alone could urge me. Shall I now deceive
To save my life? I rather would deceive
To hasten on my death ...
*Haem.* At least awhile,
Awhile suspend it, though it be so fix'd,
Thy lofty and inexorable will.
I ask for nothing that's of thee unworthy:
But yet, if thou canst only by delay
Give comfort to another; if thou canst
Live without infamy; why shouldst thou be
So cruel to thyself, to me so cruel?
*Ant.* ... Haemon, I cannot do it ... To myself
Cruel I'm not:—Of Œdipus I'm daughter.—
I grieve for thee; but yet ...
*Haem.* I know it well:
Motive to thee of life I ne'er can be;—
Yet thy companion certainly in death.—
But yet beyond the dreary waves of Styx
All the dear objects of thy lofty heart
Are not translated yet, Antigone:
In a sad life, but still it is in life,
Œdipus and Argeia still remain,
And her poor little one, who now grows up
The living image of thy Polynices;
For whom, perchance, thou wouldst one day desire
The passage to this throne, to thee but useless,
To be preserved. Ah! yield a little while.—
Thou ought'st to feign to listen to my prayers,
And that thou wilt be mine, in case that Creon
Allows a little interval of time

For thy most reasonable ling'ring grief.
I too will feign to be appeased with this:
And will, at all events, obtain consent
For some delay of Creon. We may hope,
Meanwhile, for much, from the effects of time:
I never can believe the Argive monarch
Will, to the thrall of ignominious fetters,
Abandon his own daughter. Oftentimes,
Whence least he's look'd for, the defender rises.
Ah, live! once more I do asseverate
That for myself I ask it not: ah, live!
I am resolved to follow thee; and yet
I feel no pity for my own position;
Nor shouldst thou feel it for me: for thy blind
And wand'ring father, for Argeia, here
An exile, I bespeak, conjure, thy pity.
Thou mayst from chains release her, to behold
Once more her father, and rejoice his heart.
Ah! be constrain'd, what for thyself thou feel'st not,
To feel for them, compassion; at thy feet
Prostrate, and overwhelm'd with bitter tears,
Haemon invokes thy pity, . . . he conjures it . . .
*Ant.* And I conjure thee . . . now that I have need,
More than I ever had, of constancy,
Do not, in tears effeminate of love,
Do not dissolve my heart . . . If potent thus
O'er my fond breast thou art, (and that thou art,
These rending conflicts but too well convince me) . . .
Help me to save my fame; leave me to die,
If it indeed be true that thou dost love me.
*Haem.* . . . Alas! . . . yet I have not deluded thee . . .
All that I've said to thee, is possible.
*Ant.* I never can be thine; why should I live?—
O Heav'ns! that I at least had never known
The real cause of my despairing grief.—
And if I should, as spouse, unite myself
To thee but in appearance, what would Greece,
In hearing of it, say? My wretched father,
He who alone for my protracted life
Would be a worthy cause, if ever he
Of such a union heard! . . . In case that grief,

Torment, and shame, have not destroy'd him yet,
To his paternal heart the horrid news
Would be a mortal stab. Ah, wretched father!
I know too well I ne'er shall see thee more;
No, never more; . . . but, lonely, and the last
Of all thy children, I will die not guilty . . .
*Haem.* My heart thou rendest; . . . yet I feel constrain'd
Such a resolve to venerate: for I,
E'en I, to virtue am not quite a stranger . . .
But, then, to let thee perish! . . . Deign to hear,
If thou detest me not, my latest prayer:
At thy side will I plant myself; the blow,
The mortal blow, my bosom shall transfix,
Before it reaches thine: on cruel Creon,
Thou, thus, in part at least, mayst be avenged.
*Ant.* Live, Haemon, I command thee . . . Love in us
Is such a crime, that I, by death, atone for 't;
Do thou by life.
*Haem.* —One, one more, last attempt.
Inhuman father, sanguinary king,
Thou of a frantic and despairing son
Shalt be constrain'd to hear the latest accents.
*Ant.* Alas! what is it that thou now contrivest?
A rebel to thy father? . . . Ah, avoid
So horrible a stain, or do not hope
That I can love thee.
*Haem.* From thy fierce resolve
Can nothing make thee swerve?
*Ant.* Nothing; if thou
Canst not.
*Haem.* Thou, then, preparest now? . . .
*Ant.* Ah, never, . . .
Never to see thee more.
*Haem.* In a short time
Thou shalt, I swear, again behold my face.
*Ant.* Ah, stop. Alas! . . . dost thou not hear me, Haemon? . . .
What wouldst thou do?
*Haem.* Spite of thyself, preserve thee.
*Ant.* Stop . . .

### SCENE IV.

ANTIGONE, GUARDS.

*Ant.* Heav'ns! . . . he hears me not.—Now quickly, guards,
Again conduct me into Creon's presence.

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## ACT IV.

### SCENE I.

CREON, ANTIGONE, GUARDS.

*Cre.* Hast chosen?
*Ant.* I have chosen.
*Cre.* Haemon?
*Ant.* Death.
*Cre.* Death thou shalt have.—But take especial heed,
That when the axe is lifted o'er thy head,
Thou dost not flinch: the time for penitence
Will then be past. Ill, p'rhaps, thou wilt sustain
The aspect fierce of death when it approaches;
Ill, if thou love her, p'rhaps, thou wilt sustain
Argeia's tears; she, by thy side, is doom'd
To breathe her last; and thou art cause alone
Of her untimely end.—Ah! think of it;
Thou still hast time . . . I yet exhort thee to it.—
Now, what is thy reply? . . . Thou speakest not?
Intrepidly and steadily thou lookest?
Yes, haughty one, yes, thou shalt have from me
That which thy contumelious silence asks.
I now regret that I allow'd thee choice
Betwixt my own dishonor and thy death.
*Ant.* Hast finish'd? Why delay? Be silent, act.
*Cre.* Make a parade of courage at thy will:
We soon shall see how far that courage goes.
Although the chosen moment of thy death
Is not arrived, to gratify thy wish
It shall be hasten'd.—Go, Eurymedon;
Quickly conduct her to the ready scaffold.

## Scene II.

HAEMON, ANTIGONE, CREON, GUARDS.

*Haem.* Stop . . . To the scaffold? . . .
*Ant.* Now, ye guards, make haste;
O misadventurous sight! . . . drag me to death.
Leave me, O Haemon, leave me! . . . now, farewell.
*Haem.* Let none of you presume to drag her farther!
*Cre.* Rash youth! Dost menace in thy father's presence? . . .
*Haem.* Thus dost thou love me, father? Thus cut short
The day thou granted'st to her? . . .
*Cre.* 'Tis her will
Thus to precipitate her destiny;
Can I refuse compliance?
*Haem.* Hear, O hear!
Dost thou not know then? Thou art menaced now
With other and most unexpected troubles.
It is reported that the king of Athens,
Theseus, that valiant hero, comes to Thebes
With armèd multitudes. O'erwhelm'd in tears,
And claiming reparation at his hands,
To him the mourning Argive widows went.
The king attended to their just complaints,
And pledged himself to gain for them the urns
Of their dead husbands; and thou knowest well
That Theseus is no empty promiser.—
Father, do thou anticipate his wrath,
And our disgrace prevent. I ask thee not
Basely to quail at contumelious menace;
But that thou shouldst feel pity for thy Thebes:
Scarce do the glad notes of returning peace
Freshen the morning gales; though, for thy sake,
In an unrighteous cause I took up arms;
What men of prowess now remain in Thebes?
There lie the valiant on the battle-field,
Valiant no more; there, on the' ensanguined bed,
Pale and exanimate.
*Cre.* To abject fear
Dost deem it possible for me to yield?
Say, to what purpose, then, dost thou thus dwell

On distant, dubious, p'rhaps unfounded, dangers?
Theseus, that valiant hero, at my hands
Has not demanded yet the Argive urns;
Nor have I yet refused them to his threats:
P'rhaps ere he seeks to treat with me for Argos,
I may anticipate his mediation.
Art thou contented? Thebes is yet secure;
I have no wish for war.—At last permit
That to her destiny this person go.

*Haem.* Wilt thou, then, thus for ever lose thy son?...
In vain thou hopest that a single day
I should survive her. P'rhaps to lose thy son
Is but a trifle; but by this one deed
Thou rushest on a thousand various perils.
Antigone is now absolved; thyself
Absolved'st her when thou didst abrogate
Thy unjust law. All now are well aware
That thou contrived'st for her sake alone
The' abominable snare. Shall Thebes behold
The honor'd daughter of her kings expire
Upon an infamous and bloody scaffold?
Ah, flatter not thyself that thou dost reign
O'er subjects so degraded. Loud laments,
Desperate menaces, and clank of arms,
Are heard already; even now they doubt...

*Cre.* Enough.—Since thou dost will it otherwise,
Thebes shall not see upon a bloody scaffold
The honor'd daughter of their kings expire.—
Soldiers, soon as the shades of night descend,
Ye shall conduct her to the plain, where lie
The' unburied heroes. 'Tis no longer lawful
Interment to refuse to any one:
The mighty Theseus doth prohibit this:
Let her, then, have, upon the field of battle,
The' interment which on others she bestow'd:
Yes, there alive be buried...

*Haem.* Heav'ns! what hear I?
Dost thou dare thus defy both gods and men?
Ere thou canst put thy threat in execution,
Thou from the veins of thy indignant son
Must drain each drop of blood. Buried alive?

Ah, vile one! . . . sooner on this very spot
Shall I be slain; reduced to dust and ashes . . .
*Ant.* Ah, Haemon, wilt thou make thyself unworthy
Of my affection? Whatsoe'er he be,
He is thy father. Even from my birth
My fate has doom'd me to a fearful death:
If it be so, what signifies the place,
The time, the manner of my death? . . .
*Cre.* In vain
Thou wouldst oppose; thou canst not rescue her,
Nor benefit thyself . . . A wretched father
Thou wilt make me; nought else canst thou effect . . .
*Haem.* It gratifies my soul to make thee wretched;
Thou dost deserve it; and thou shalt be so.
The wicked throne allures thee to defy
All the most sacred duties of a king,
Of father, and of man: but the more firm
Thou deem'st that throne, the more it shakes beneath
Thy sacrilegious and usurping feet.
The Thebans 'twixt the father and the son
Clearly distinguish . . . and there lives the man
Who, with a nod, could snatch from thee at once
Thy throne so fraudulently gotten:—reign;
I will not give the signal; but, if harm
Befall this virgin, tremble . . .
*Ant.* I beseech thee,
Creon, ah quickly execute thy sentence!
O fatal pow'r of adverse destiny!
To my so many unexampled woes,
And to my guilty birth, there wanted nought
But that I should be 'twixt a son and father
The instigator of atrocious rage! . . .
*Haem.* Listen to me, to me alone, O Creon:
Since swords of Athens, and its valiant king,
The prayers of females, and the loud lament
Of frantic multitudes, appal thee not:
Now on thy hard heart may the cry descend,
The piercing cry, of a despairing son,
From whom thou hast by mad ambition torn
All pow'r of self-control; to whom, alas!
It had been better hadst thou ne'er giv'n life;

And who, on this tremendous day, may make thee
Repent of such a gift.
*Cre.* No human cry
Suffices to impose a law on Creon.
*Haem.* There is a human sword that may suffice
To cut those laws at once.
*Cre.* And 'tis?
*Haem.* My sword.
*Cre.* Perfidious traitor!—Plot thy father's death;
Cut short my days at once; ah, dare to do it!
Seize on the kingdom; trouble its repose . . .
I'm still thy father, though thou'rt scarce my son.
I know not how, nor can I, punish thee:
I have no pow'r, except to love thee still,
And thy degen'rate spirit to lament . . .
Say, what of difficult do I achieve
That is not for thy profit? but, ingrate,
And deaf, alas! too much so, thou dost dare
Prefer a love both indiscreet and foolish,
A love not well received, to lofty thoughts
Of policy, to sacred rights of blood . . .
*Haem.* Say, of what rights of blood dost thou now speak?
Thou art throughout a king: thou canst not love
Thy son: thou only seekest a support
To tyranny. Should I, who spring from thee,
Feel reverentially for ties of blood?
Thou art my law, my sole preceptor thou,
In cruelty; I follow thee: the goal
Which thou hast shown to me I first will reach;
I swear I will.—What lofty policy,
I pray thee, prompts the open turpitude
Which thou designest? Take thou heed, lest I
Should, in like manner, as thou provest it,
Return thy love . . . That love engenders crimes;
From it a thousand trespasses result,
Augmenting evermore;—and this thou knowest.
*Ant.* E'en now I hate thee, if thou dost proceed.
Thou wert the son of Creon long before
Thou wert my lover; strong, infrangible,
Of all ties holiest, is the tie of son.

Think, Haemon, ah, I do conjure thee, think,
That to this very tie I fall a victim.
That I do love thee, Heav'n itself bears witness;
Yet I refuse thy hand, not to offend
The shades, yet unappeased, of the departed.
Death I prefer, a shameful death I choose,
That tidings insupportable to him
Of me, my wretched father may not hear.—
Then be not thou refractory; but live
The' obsequious son of a flagitious father.

*Cre.* His fury irritates my bosom less
Than thy compassion.—Take her from my sight.—
Go, go . . . ah, wert thou once but fairly gone!
Thy presence from the path of rectitude
Alone seduces Haemon.—At the hour,
Which I already have assign'd to thee,
Eurymedon, conduct her to the plain;
And there, at once, give her both death and burial.

## Scene III.

CREON, HAEMON, GUARDS.

*Haem.* —Before the hour assign'd, thou from the camp
Tidings shalt hear of me.

*Cre.* Before that time
Haemon will see his error, and repent it.—
I might anticipate and thus defeat
Thy idle menaces:—but I will give thee
A more convincing proof of my affection,
By trusting to thy elevated heart,
Thy early virtues, which I fain would think
Are not yet dead.

*Haem.* —That which I mean to do
Shall be full worthy of my early virtues.

## Scene IV.

CREON, GUARDS.

*Cre.* —I know his temper well: his sense of honor,
More than aught else, can curb its vehemence:
My seeming confidence will much enthrall

The workings of his rage . . . yet p'rhaps to-day,
Intoxicated as he is with love,
He may resort to force? . . . But 'twill be easy
For me to watch, deceive, defeat, his steps:
When once Antigone has lost her life,
All will be easy . . . Theseus to appease,
And silence on the multitude impose,
Regain my son: all this will be as nothing.—
But of Argeia how shall I dispose?—
Guards, bring Argeia instantly before me.—
Her death no longer can promote my schemes;
And 'tis my int'rest now to pacify,
While yet I may, the anger of Adrastus:
I have too many enemies already.
I will restore her to her sire in Argos:
This restoration, as 'tis unexpected,
Will yield him more delight; and thus the stain
Of cruelty, imputed to my nature,
Will be not inconsiderably lessen'd.

## Scene V.

CREON, ARGEIA, GUARDS.

*Cre.* Argeia, listen to me.—Grief sincere,
Love of thy husband, and fond piety,
Conducted thee to Thebes, where thou alone
Hadst never dared to brave my prohibition . . .
*Ar.* Thou art mistaken; I alone . . .
*Cre.* Well, well,
Thou didst defy it then, impell'd by pity;
Not from contempt, and as in proud defiance
Of my authority; not to excite
Noisy disturbances: I can discern
Pity and love from factious disobedience,
Veiling its close designs with better motives.
I am not cruel as thou mayst account me;
And, as a proof of this, I give thee freedom.
The shades of night protected thy approach;
When the sun sets, the shades of night once more
Shall reconduct thee to thy sire in Argos.
*Ar.* Farewell eternal I've to Argos given:

The last remains of murder'd Polynices
Are laid in Thebes; in Thebes, or dead or living,
I therefore will remain.
*Cre.* Dost thou not wish
To see once more thy child, thy sire, thy country?
*Ar.* I never can desert the sacred ashes
Of my belovèd spouse.
*Cre.* In this, thy wish
I likewise will indulge: thou cam'st by stealth
To seize his urn; receive it openly,
And bear the precious burden back to Argos.
Depart; and there erect, among thy kindred,
A tomb expressive of thy deep regret,
To thy belovèd spouse.
*Ar.* And is it true?
Whence can such clemency arise? And how
Canst thou so differ from thy former self,
And be sincere? . . .
*Cre.* Erewhile inflamed with rage
Thou sawest me; but rage in me is transient;
Reason and time abate it.
*Ar.* May kind Heaven
Grant thee a reign both long and prosperous!
Thou then art won to clemency? What joy
Thy people and thy son will thence derive!—
Thou hast at last felt pity for our fate;
Thou also ceasest, with the name of guilt,
To stigmatise compassion in ourselves;
And the offence to which thou forced'st us
Thou pardonest in us . . .
*Cre.* I pardon thee.
*Ar.* Is not Antigone then safe?
*Cre.* I do not
Confound thy fault with hers.
*Ar.* What do I hear?
She groans in fetters yet? . . .
*Cre.* Why question thus?
Prepare for thy departure.
*Ar.* Shall I go,
And leave in peril my belovèd sister?
Vainly thou hopest it. Thy pardon pleased me

Because I thought she bore in it a part;
But she is fetter'd yet? Fierce punishments
P'rhaps yet await her? I will then be fetter'd;
And I will suffer punishments more fierce . . .
*Cre.* In Thebes, I will; not others; to that will
Of mine, all yield.—Thou hast infringed my law;
And yet I pardon thee: thou wouldst construct
Thy husband's funeral pile; this thou hast done:
Bear back his ashes to thy native Argos;
I yield those ashes to thee.—What more wouldst thou?
What more dost dare to ask? Dost thou expect
That I should be accountable to thee? . . .
*Ar.* Concede to me the favor, I entreat thee,
Of seeing her once more.
*Cre.* Thou wouldst, perchance,
Gain from her intercourse a hardihood
Which, in thyself, thou feel'st not?—When 'tis night,
I shall expect thee to depart from Thebes:
If thou wilt not go of thine own accord,
By force thou goest hence.
*Ar.* Than any death
Thy pardon harder is: death, which to all
Thou givest, why to me alone deny?
'Tis not that thou'rt withheld by any fear
Of spilling blood. I am less innocent
Than is Antigone, why should not I
Incur an equal portion of thy fury? . . .
*Cre.* Deem it or clemency or punishment,
Thy going hence; it gives me little pain;
Provided only that thou dost depart.—
Guards, to your keeping I entrust her person:
At night-fall to the Omolæan gate
Descend, and bear her to the Argive confines:
If she refuse to go, drag her by force.—
In the meantime replace her in the prison.
*Ar.* Hear me! . . . have pity . . .
*Cre.* Hence: depart.—

### Scene VI.

CREON.

*Cre.* Must I
To my commands, whether they're kind or cruel,
Find all rebellious?—All at last shall yield.

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## ACT V.

### Scene I.

ANTIGONE, *among Guards.*

*Ant.* Let us make better speed; so slow a step
Ill becomes her, who has, at length, just reach'd
The goal so long desired . . . Ye, p'rhaps, O guards,
May feel compassion for my fate? . . . Proceed.—
O dreadful death, I look thee in the face,
And yet I tremble not.—Not for myself,
But for Argeia, am I troubled thus:
Guards! is her fate to any of you known? . . .
Speak, if ye aught can tell? . . . ye all are silent? . . .
Argeia! for thy sake alone I weep . . .

### Scene II.

ANTIGONE, ARGEIA, *among Guards.*

*Ar.* I am then chased from Thebes? . . . 'Tis true, I bear,
Beginning and the end of all my hopes,
This urn with me; . . . but not one last farewell
To my beloved companion! . . .
*Ant.* Ah! what voice,
What sobbing voice is that I hear? . . .
*Ar.* O Heavens
Whom do I see?
*Ant.* Argeia!
*Ar.* Dearest sister . . .
How fortunate this meeting!—But, alas!
Thy hands with chains are laden? . . .

*Ant.* Tell me quickly!
Where art thou thus by force compell'd to go?
*Ar.* To Argos, to my sire.
*Ant.* I breathe again.
*Ar.* Creon esteems me of so little worth,
That he will have me saved: but, as for thee . . .
*Ant.* —Guards, if ye ever knew a shade of pity,
To our last interview do not refuse
A few brief moments.—Come to me, my sister;
Why cannot I to this sad bosom clasp thee?
But, bound with infamous and galling chains,
I have no pow'r . . . yet clasp me to thy bosom.
But what do I behold? What precious burden
Dost thou, with such a fond anxiety,
Fold to thy breast? An urn? It is . . . O Heavens!
The ashes of my brother, fatal pledge,
Fatal, and yet inestimably dear; . . .
Ah, press this sacred relic to my lips!—
And is it granted to me, ere I die,
With my warm tears to bathe thee? . . . O my brother!
'Tis more than e'er I hoped; . . . these tears, the last
That I shall ever shed, are well bestow'd.—
This, O Argeia, is a precious gift:
Creon, in granting this, was most indulgent:
Thou shouldst be satisfied. Return to Argos;
Quickly return; to thy despairing father
Carry this urn . . . Live; for thy son's sake, live,
And o'er this urn to weep; and . . . mid . . . thy . . . tears
Remember still . . . Antigone . . .
*Ar.* My heart
Thou rendest . . . scarcely can I speak . . . from weeping:
But shall I live . . . while thou art doom'd . . . to death? . . .
*Ant.* Yes; to a death most horrible I go.
The plain, on which we piously perform'd
Last night our sacred rites, is destined now
To be my place of burial; Creon wills
That, on that plain, I should be buried living.
*Ar.* O impious one! . . .
*Ant.* Because he fears the people,
He has deferr'd till night to execute

The cruel sentence.—Ah, restrain thy tears:
Leave me; depart; thus will, at last, in me
The race of Œdipus be quite extinguish'd.
This I regret not; may my ling'ring death
Suffice to expiate the dreadful crimes,
So oft repeated, of my family! . . .
*Ar.* Ah! I will share with thee thy punishment;
Thy courage strengthens mine; thy pangs, in part,
May p'rhaps be thus diminish'd . . .
*Ant.* What dost say?
Rather will they be thus a thousand times
More exquisite.
*Ar.* Together if we die,
We may, at least, invoke the sacred name
Of Polynices; may exhort each other,
And then we may shed tears . . .
*Ant.* Be silent thou . . .
Do not, I pray thee, make me weep again . . .
To the last test my constancy is brought.—
My tears I cannot any longer check . . .
*Ar.* Alas! then cannot I now rescue thee?
Cannot I die with thee, O Heav'ns? . . .
*Ant.* Ah, live!
Thou'rt not the child of Œdipus; thy heart
Is not like mine, with guilty love consumed;
Of the betrayer and the murderer
Of all thy race, thou lovest not the son.
Here is my crime; alone I expiate it.—
Haemon, ah, still my heart, in all its force,
The passion feels which thou hast planted there:
Feels all the grief to which I leave thee victim.—
Now to my doom.—Farewell, . . . farewell, my sister!

## Scene III.

CREON, ANTIGONÉ, ARGEIA, GUARDS.

*Cre.* Why do ye thus delay? Has she not yet
Reach'd the appointed place of punishment?
What do I see? Argeia? And with her? . . .
Who could unite them?—Which of you betray'd me?
*Ant.* Thy satellites, less harden'd than thyself,

To us have granted a few transient moments.
By chance we met each other: to my death
I hasten now; O Creon, be not angry.
Thou hast perform'd a just and pious deed,
In granting thus Argeia's safe return.
*Ar.* Creon, unite my destiny to hers . . .
*Ant.* Ah fly, ah fly; lest he should cease to pity.
*Cre.* First to her destination drag Argeia . . .
*Ar.* Ah cruel! will ye tear me thus by force? . . .
*Ant.* Give me the last embrace.
*Cre.* Tear them by force:
Tear them asunder; wrest them from each other:
Quickly obey, it is my will.
*Ar.* O Heavens!
I ne'er shall see thee more? . . .
*Ant.* Farewell, . . . for ever . . .

## Scene IV.

CREON, ANTIGONE, GUARDS.

*Cre.* By yonder gate conduct her to the plain.
But no.—Again immure her in the place
From whence she came.—Ipseus, listen to me.[1]—

## Scene V.

CREON.

*Cre.* —Thus from the malcontents have I removed
All cause of tumult. I have well reflected:
Nor should have changed my purpose, but for this; . . .
By this means all will be conciliated.—
The guilty murmurs of the people rise
From an innate impatience of restraint;
Yet oft they cloak themselves in feign'd compassion.
And evermore with danger is it fraught,
The people's pity, whether true or feign'd;
And now, so much the more, as now my son,
By heading them, adds to their hardihood.—
'Tis too, too true, that he who fills the throne
Vainly believes, or rather feigns belief,

[1] Whispers in his ear.

In order to deceive his mortal nature,
That he can change, or modify at will,
Human propensities, or that a king
Gains with his crown a superhuman pow'r:
That pow'r resides but in the subjects' will;
He trembles at it, who makes others tremble.—
But an expert hand, and a subtle head,
Suffer not others to forestall their schemes:
One stroke lays low the idol of the people,
Lays low their hope, their courage, and their strength,
Which is untameable, but reasons not.—
But, ah! what noise is this I hear around me?
What brandishing of swords do I behold?
What do I see? With arm'd confederates
Haemon encircled? . . . and tow'rds me advancing?—
Let him advance; the moment is well chosen.

## Scene VI.

CREON, HAEMON, THE FOLLOWERS OF HAEMON.

*Cre.* Son, what is thy intent?
*Haem.* Call me not son!
I have no father. Of a tyrant king
I come to abrogate the impious laws:
But for thyself thou hast no cause for fear;
I do not come the' avenger of thy crimes:
That to the gods belongs: to rescue Thebes
From the detested sight of further crimes,
My right hand brandishes the naked sword.
*Cre.* Against thy father, . . . and against thy king,
Thou, thou in arms?—The people to seduce
To civil tumult and rebellious discord,
This, surely, is an unexampled means
Of sparing further crimes . . . Ungrateful son,
Blind and ungrateful son! . . . yet, in despite
Of thy transgressions, to thy father dear!—
What dost thou seek? a sceptre premature?
*Haem.* Reign, and prolong thy days; no thing of thine
Do I desire: but I demand, and challenge,
And with these valiant followers, with this arm,
I shall know how to gain by force my own.

Argeia and Antigone I seek
To rescue from thy hands . . .
*Cre.* What dost thou say?—
O foolish and presumptuous hardihood!
Dar'st thou to brandish thy perfidious sword,
Against thy father brandish it, to loosen
The chains of those whose chains are loosed already?—
Argeia, from imprisonment released,
Is, at this moment, journeying tow'rds Argos;
I send her as a present to her father:
To this, thou see'st, the terror of thy sword
Did not erewhile compel me.
*Haem.* But, ah say,
What are the fortunes of Antigone? . . .
*Cre.* She from the horrors of her squalid prison
Is also freed.
*Haem.* Where is she? I would see her.
*Cre.* Is this alone thy wish?
*Haem.* On me alone
That now depends: why should I now indeed
Demand her at thy hands? I can, and will,
(Although it is not mine) for a brief while,
Give in this palace law. Brave warriors, now
Let us depart: from impious pow'r set free
A royal virgin, to whom aught is due
Rather than punishment, in this her Thebes.
*Cre.* Thy warriors are but useless; thou alone
Mayst for this task suffice: and who will dare
Thy footsteps to oppose? Ah, enter there,
Take with thee whom thou wilt; I humbly here,
Among thy champions, thy despisèd father,
Remain, till thou, her valiant liberator,
Return and triumph.
*Haem.* Thou in jest, perchance,
Dost speak; I speak in earnest. Creon, see,
See, if my deeds do not make good my words.
*Cre.* Go.[1] Thou sufficest not to humble Creon.
*Haem.* What do I see? . . . O Heav'ns! . . . Antigone!
And dead!—Vile tyrant, . . . dost thou smite me thus?

[1] The scene opens, and discovers the dead body of Antigone.

*Cre.* 'Tis thus I humble pride: thus to my laws
Enforce obedience; thus reform my son.
*Haem.* Reform me? Ah, I am too much thy son!
Ah, were I not so! in thy bosom thus.[1]—
I die . . . I die . . .
*Cre.* Stop, son, what art thou doing?—
*Haem.* Dost thou inopportunely pity me? . . .
Carry elsewhere thy pity . . . come not near me . . .
Do not exasperate my dying pangs . . .
Thus I return to thee thy blood; 'twere better
That I had never had it.
*Cre.* Son, rash son! . . .
I call the gods to witness . . . I ne'er thought
That an ungovernable love would thus
Arm thee against thyself . . .
*Haem.* Go, . . . quit my sight;
And force me not, with my last gasp, to curse thee
With horrid imprecations of despair . . .
I was . . . to thee a son . . . Thou never wert,
Never . . . to me . . . a father . . .
*Cre.* O my son! . . .
*Haem.* I leave thee to remorse and bitter anguish.—
My friends, my friends, as a last act of kindness, . . .
Drag my expiring body . . . to the spot . . .
Where lies Antigone; . . . It is my wish
That thence my struggling spirit . . . take from earth . . .
Its latest flight . . .
*Cre.* O son . . . too well beloved! . . .
And must I yield thee thus? for ever thus
Remain a childless wretch? . . .
*Haem.* Once more, O Creon,
Or in my bosom plunge the fatal weapon, . . .
Or let me to the side of her . . . I love . . .
Be dragg'd . . . and . . . there . . . expire.[2]
*Cre.* O son! . . . O blow
Fatal and unexpected![3]

[1] He springs towards his father with his drawn sword, but on a sudden stops, and, turning it, plunges it into his own bosom.
[2] He is slowly supported by his followers towards the body of Antigone.
[3] He covers his face, and remains motionless, until Haemon is almost out of the sight of the spectators.

## Scene VII.

CREON.

*Cre.* —Thus, thou first
Tremendous retribution of the skies,
For blood unjustly spill'd, art thou accomplish'd!...
I see thee arm'd with terrors.—And I tremble.

IV.

# VIRGINIA.

## THE ARGUMENT.

THE story of Virginia, as given in Roman history, and told by Alfieri in this play, is too well known to require lengthened explanation. Virginia, the beautiful daughter of Virginius and Numitoria, is betrothed to Icilius. Appius Claudius, however, the chief of the Decemviri who then governed Rome, falls desperately in love with her, and, in order to gain possession of her, directs his creature Marcus to pretend that she is his slave, and not the daughter of Numitoria, who, he alleges, has palmed her off on Virginius as being their child. Marcus accordingly tries to drag her away from her mother, under pretence of getting the matter decided before the proper tribunal, when Icilius appears, and makes a spirited appeal to the people against the tyranny of the Decemviri. But it is at length arranged that the cause shall be tried before Appius Claudius. After an exciting scene in the presence of assembled Rome, when, after Marcus had stated his case, Icilius had revealed to the people the vile plot, and almost succeeded in inducing them to revolt, Appius, alarmed for his power, agreed to postpone his decision till Virginius arrives from the camp where he was stationed, but sent secret orders to detain him there. Virginius, however, urged by a message from Icilius, arrives in Rome without delay, and the whole villainy is unfolded to him by his

wife and intended son-in-law. The two heroes determine on rescuing Rome from her degrading tyranny, and Virginia expresses her readiness to have her own blood shed in the sacred cause of liberty.

An interview next takes place between Appius and Virginius. The former endeavors to induce Virginius, under a promise of a supreme command, to abandon Icilius, whom he describes as a dark conspirator against Rome, and tells him that, if he persists in giving Virginia to the latter, they shall both perish. He then sees Virginia, and says that, if she will discard Icilius in his favor, Marcus's claim to her shall be set aside; but that otherwise both Virginius and Icilius shall lose their lives. To save them, Virginia offers to give up all thoughts of Icilius and implores for mercy; but presently recovers her native courage.

At length Virginius and Icilius make their final arrangements for the supreme effort; but presently Virginia and her mother appear, followed by all the people, and announce with lamentations that Icilius has been treacherously murdered by the myrmidons of Appius. Virginius makes an impassioned appeal to the people, who however appear cowed; Appius orders Virginia to be given up to Marcus; Virginius asks to be allowed to give her his last embrace, and stabs her to the heart. The curtain falls whilst a struggle is going on between the populace and the satellites of Appius.

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This is the last of the four plays originally published by Alfieri in 1783. Sismondi objects to it that it finishes without the audience knowing whether the tyrant or the people are victorious, and that the essential laws of unity are thus violated, though he highly praises the tragedy, as a whole. Augustus Schlegel, in general no favorable critic of Alfieri, thinks this one of the best of his plays,

and says he succeeds best when he paints the public life of the Roman republic. Calsabigi esteems this the most successful of the earlier tragedies, and thoroughly imbued with the Roman spirit of the time. While praising all the characters, he singles out for special commendation the 3rd Scene of Act III. between the father, mother, daughter and her betrothed, and the 4th Scene of Act IV. between Appius and his victim, together with the final catastrophe, which is theatrical in the extreme. Alfieri mentions that he twice changed Act V. and that Icilius was originally left alive. Elsewhere he states that Act IV. is the weak part of this tragedy, of which, as a whole, he is obviously proud. The judicious criticisms of Lampredi on the manuscript in 1777 led to many improvements in the work.

# VIRGINIA.

"Virginia, with her sire so stern, and arm'd
With anger and with iron, and with pity."
PETRARCH'S *Triumph of Chastity.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| APPIUS CLAUDIUS. | MARCUS. |
| VIRGINIUS. | PEOPLE. |
| NUMITORIA. | *Lictors.* |
| VIRGINIA. | *Followers of Icilius.* |
| ICILIUS. | *Slaves of Marcus.* |

SCENE.—*The Forum in Rome.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

NUMITORIA, VIRGINIA.

*Nu.* What thus delays thee? Come: to our abode
Let us return.
*Virginia.* O mother, when I pass
This forum, recollections deep and lofty
Delay my progress. It was in this place
That erewhile thunder'd from Icilius' lips
The sentiments of liberty; but now
Absolute pow'r long since has made him mute.
How just are both his anger and his grief!
*Nu.* Perchance this day, to his so many griefs,
Will yield some solace, if he truly love thee.

*Virginia.* To-day? . . . If he doth love me? . . . O, what hear I!

*Nu.* My daughter, yes: at last thy father hears,
And grants fulfilment to thy fervent wishes:
He from the camp has written, and proposes
Himself to hasten on thy nuptial rites.

*Virginia.* Is it then true, that, of my ling'ring hopes,
I gain at last the object? Dearest mother,
How happy thou hast made me!

*Nu.* To Virginius,
Not less than to thyself, for a long time
Icilius has been dear: they both are Romans;
And are so more by actions than by name.
It was not ever possible for thee
To fix more loftily thy thoughts of love
Than in Icilius' heart: nor did thy father,
Till equal to thy beauty was thy virtue,
Affiance thee to him; he would thou wert
Worthy Icilius, ere Icilius' spouse.

*Virginia.* And does he think me so to-day? O joy
Immense and unexpected! To obtain
A husband like Icilius, seem'd to me
The first of ev'ry blessing; yet it is
A far superior blessing to deserve him.

*Nu.* Thou meritest his hand; and he alone,
Of all the Roman youth, doth merit thine;
He that dares show himself a Roman yet,
While Rome debased in guilty silence stands
Astonish'd, and, though plunged in servitude,
Thinks herself free. Ah, were they like to him,
The' illustrious traitors to the commonwealth,
Who, while with exultation they recount
The great deeds of their ancestors, disgrace them!
Sense, virtue, valor, uncorrupted faith,
Have, in Icilius' bosom, found a home . . .

*Virginia.* He is not noble, that for me suffices;
He is not to his country's tyrants sold:
Hence is he grateful to my unspoil'd heart.
Upon his open, enterprising brow,
I see the magnanimity enthroned
That designates a genuine son of Rome.

In these degen'rate times, when even they
Who flatter, tremble, his intrepid speech,
His unperturbèd heart, his noble rage,
These are the qualities by him possess'd,
Which have enthrall'd the' affections of my heart.
Myself plebeian, I dare boast myself
The equal of Icilius; I should weep,
Were I from noble ancestors descended,
Since I should then to him inferior be.
*Nu.* Thou didst imbibe, e'en with thy milk from me,
A detestation of patrician blood:
Foster that hatred; 'tis their due, who are,
As prosp'rous accidents, or adverse, rise,
Now proud, now humble, always infamous.
*Virginia.* Shall I belie my birth? Thou know'st not, mother,
A cause, which that magnanimous contempt
In me redoubles. I will now relate
Some private injuries as yet conceal'd.
*Nu.* Let us meanwhile press forward.
*Virginia.* Thou shalt hear
To what this beauty, only prized by me
Since grateful to Icilius, hath exposed me . . .

## Scene II.

VIRGINIA, NUMITORIA, MARCUS, SLAVES.

*Mar.* This is the damsel. Slaves, without delay,
Drag her to my abode: she, like yourselves,
Was born my servant.
*Nu.* What is this I hear? . . .
And who art thou that dar'st to designate
As slave, a Roman woman?
*Mar.* Thy deceit
Is known; and vainly wouldst thou rescue her
From her predestined servitude. Her birth
To thee she owes not, neither is it free.
I also am a citizen of Rome;
I know its laws; I fear them and observe them;
And from those laws the courage I derive,
That which belongs to me to take by force.

*Virginia.* I born a slave? Thou callest me thy slave?
*Nu.* She not my daughter? O thou liar vile,
Dar'st style thyself a Roman citizen?
From thy flagitious words, and from thy acts,
I take thee for the tyrants' satellite,
The worst amongst them. But whoe'er thou art,
Learn that we are plebeians, of a race
Unsullied; that all violence and fraud
From infamous patricians, and their clients,
May be expected here: and, further learn,
That of this maid Virginius is the father,
And I the spouse of that Virginius am;
That for his native Rome, now in the camp
He toils in arms; . . . that he may well suffice
To disconcert thy impious hardihood . . .
*Mar.* And that, deceived by thee, he deems this virgin,
Purchased illegally, to be his child:
Nor hath he known, nor knows, the art by which
Thou hast imposed on him a child not his.
But thou shalt hear me, in a fitting place,
The most undoubted proofs of this adduce.
Meanwhile my slave must come away with me.
I am no liar, nor Virginius fear:
Beneath the sacred guardianship I stand
Securely, of inviolable laws.
*Virginia.* Mother, and shall I lose thee? and with thee,
My sire, my husband, and my liberty? . . .
*Nu.* I call to witness Rome, and Heav'n as well;
She is my daughter.
*Mar.* Thou in vain dost swear;
In vain defiest me. Without delay
My slaves she follows; or, compell'd by force,
She shall go hence. If so thou wilt, hereafter,
Before an uncorrupt, supreme tribunal,
To give an ample reason, I am ready
For what I do.
*Nu.* Thou deem'st thyself more strong
Than helpless women; hence thy hardihood:
But with impunity thou shalt not now
Adopt coercive measures. Ill, I warn thee,
Ill chosen is the scene for infamy:

This is the Roman forum; know'st it not?
Now go; the multitude will flock together
At our laments: of virgin innocence
Avengers rise by thousands and by thousands.
*Virginia.* If no avenger should espouse my cause,
Blood-hounds, ye should be forced to slay me here,
Rather than drag me as a slave. I am,
I feel, the daughter of a lofty sire:
I feel my Roman and my free-born heart
Bound high within my breast. Far diff'rent, yes,
Far diff'rent were that heart, if, sprung from one
Vile like thyself, I were a viler slave.
*Mar.* Quickly shalt thou resume thy servile thoughts
Amid thy native fetters; by one stroke
Thy fate, and thy deportment, shall be changed.
Meanwhile, in contests frivolous and vain,
Time passes on . . .
*Nu.* Together with my daughter
I would be led.
*Virginia.* No violence shall tear me,
O mother, from thy side.
*Mar.* Vain is the struggle.—
From her false mother, wrest by violence
This slave and fugitive.
*Virginia.* If ye feel pity,
Rescue me, valiant Romans . . .
*Nu.* Gen'rous sons
Of Mars, this virgin, whom I clasp so fondly
To my maternal breast, was born, like you,
Free and a Roman: shall these impious slaves
Tear her from me by force? before your eyes?
E'en in the midst of Rome? and in the presence
Of our most sacred temples?

## Scene III.

ICILIUS, PEOPLE, NUMITORIA, VIRGINIA, MARCUS.

*Ici.* What disturbance!
What screams!—O Heav'ns! what is it that I see?
Virginia! . . .
*Virginia.* O defend me . . .

*Nu.* Heav'n has sent thee;
Run, hasten, fly. Thy spouse with pressing danger
Is threaten'd.
*Virginia.* I am torn from thee, my mother,
And from myself. That man has vilified
Me with the name of slave.
*Ici.* Of slave? O vile one!
Are these thy noble enterprises? Thou,
Art thou more skill'd to combat in the forum
Than in the camp? O of all slaves the worst!
Dar'st thou to brand this maid with servitude?
*Mar.* Icilius, thou accustom'd to debates,
Foster'd in discord and fierce turbulence,
It well becomes thee, that, to waken tumults,
The food congenial to thy wrathful nature,
Thou shouldst assign this frivolous pretence.
But since, in spite of thee, there are at Rome
Most sacred laws, what cause have I to fear thee?
She is my slave; yes, she; once more I say it;
And I, to whom it most imports to prove it,
Will prove her to be so. Not thou, I deem,
Nor those, like thee, whose contumacious scowl
Bespeaks their factious nature, are my judges.
*Ici.* Icilius, and a few like him, here stand
Tremendous advocates of innocence.—
Ye that are Romans, listen to my words:
I, who have never forfeited my oath;
I, who have ne'er betray'd or sold my honor;
Who equally exult that I possess
Ignoble parents, and a noble heart;
Listen to me; to you I speak. This virgin,
Free-born and guileless, is Virginius' daughter . . .
At the mere mention of that name, I see
A noble indignation in your eyes.
For you Virginius combats in the camp:
O see on what degen'rate times we've fallen!
Meanwhile, exposed to shame, exposed to outrage,
His child remains in Rome. Who is the culprit? . . .
Come forward, Marcus; show thyself . . . But what?
Thou tremblest?—Look at him, ye know him well;
Chief minister, and vilest satellite

Of Appius, the arch-tyrant of our times;
Of Appius, mortal foe of ev'ry virtue;
Of Appius, the oppressor, harden'd, proud,
Ferocious; who your freedom has destroy'd,
And, to increase the insult, spares your lives.—
To me Virginia is betroth'd; I love her.
Who I, that thus address you, am, I think
'Tis needless to remind you: I was once
Your tribune, your defender, . . . but in vain;
For rather did ye trust the blandishments
Of flatt'ring words, than my sincere reproofs:
We now receive for this, as punishment,
Our common servitude . . . But why say more?
Well as ye know his name, the arm, the heart,
The daring of Icilius know ye too.—
Free, at your hands, do I demand my spouse.
This fellow asks her not of you; his slave he calls her,
Seizes her person, drags her off by force.—
Which is the liar, Marcus or Icilius?
Give sentence, O ye people of great Rome!

*Mar.* Those laws, O sov'reign people, which ye framed,
Tremendous, wise, and sacred, dare ye be
The first now to infringe? No; for the gods
Of Rome will not permit it. On my head,
Then, may the weight of your resentment fall,
When I'm convicted as an unjust claimant:
But whilst vain boastings, and atrocious insults,
And horrible contemptuousness evinced
Against supreme, legitimated power,
Are the sole arms by which I am opposed;
Say, which of you will venture from her lord
To force his rightful slave?

*Ici.* I first; and I
Shall have as many comrades to this deed,
As there are Romans here. Thy fraudful claim,
Doubtless, some impious mystery conceals:
Now, by what reason thou art thus impell'd,
Who knows? who can, who would, know this? not I;
I only, that the infamous effect
Shall not ensue. Rome, since she fell a prey
To the Decemvirate, beneath the guise

Of law, enough already hath endured
Of force, of shame, of slaughter. Hitherto
I am not used to outrage: who endures,
Deserves it. Never can she be a slave,
Who is affianced to Icilius; . . . never,
E'en were she born a slave.—Was ever law
Like this unjust? Slaves in the very lap
Of liberty? And slaves to whom? To what?
To the insulting pride of our oppressors.—
Slaves are not for the people; not for us,
Who have both hearts and hands.—But let this Rome
Have slaves by thousands, and by tens of thousands,
So that Virginia be not of the number.—
Romans, meanwhile believe me: I affirm
She is the daughter of Virginius' self:
Her modest gestures, and her face declare it,
Her lofty feelings, and her ripen'd sense.
I love her; she is destined to be mine;
Shall I thus lose her?

*People.* Miserable spouse!
And who can tell who instigates this fellow?

*Ici.* O! I perceive ye feel compassion for me;
And I deserve it; on the very day
When I believed that I, of all my hopes,
Had gain'd the summit, see, I am at once
Plunged in the lowest depths of misery.
I have abundant enemies in Rome;
All are your enemies; pow'rful enough,
But still more cunning. Who can tell? Perchance,
First having robb'd me of my liberty,
They now would rob me of my wife. Behold
Their hardihood! They fables first invent;
And this man comes to give their lies a substance . . .
Ah, native Rome! to what art thou condemn'd? . . .
Flagitious nobles, ye are here the slaves;
Ye should be laden with opprobrious fetters;
Ye, in whose bosoms, fraud and cowardice,
Ambitious avarice, find their abode;
Ye, who by envy are for ever gnaw'd,
Malice, and jealousy, and bitter hate
Of our plebeian virtues, by yourselves
Not only never practised, but unknown.

Ye persecutors, clench our galling chains,
And doubly hold the multitude bound down:
The impious slavery, the woes of all,
Rather would they behold, than share with us
The sweets of liberty: by nature cruel,
To them our joy is grief, our grief a joy.
But that the times will change, I hope; and maybe
The day for this is near.
*People.* O were it so!
But...
*Mar.* Cease; no more: wouldst thou, perchance, again
Create thyself a tribune of the people?
Blood and sedition, more than aught, I know
Are grateful to thy nature; but may Heaven
Forbid to-day that I should be to thee
The means of such calamitous effects.
Practise on these, and artfully infuse
Thy bitter venom; to its virulence
No other remedy will I oppose,
Than what the laws provide. To the tribunal
Of Appius let Virginia come; and with her
Her seeming mother: I await them there;
There not fierce turbulence, and frantic howlings,
But tranquil reason will decide our cause.

## Scene IV.

ICILIUS, VIRGINIA, NUMITORIA, PEOPLE.

*Ici.* To the tribunal I myself will lead her.—
Romans (I now address the few, the free,
And the courageous), ye, I hope, will be
Of this great cause spectators: I invite you:
Our final litigation this will be.
Hence will each husband, and each father learn
If he a wife or daughter have in Rome.

## Scene V.

ICILIUS, NUMITORIA, VIRGINIA.

*Nu.* Disastrous times! Days of degen'rate deeds!...
O wretched mothers!...
*Virginia.* In thine eyes, O spouse,

But for my father's sake I have no value:
Now that I'm reft of him, how shall I dare
Proclaim myself thy spouse?
*Ici.* Thou shalt be ever
Virginius' daughter, and Icilius' spouse,
And, what is more, I swear to thee, a Roman.
To be the faithful partner of my fate
Thee have I chosen; equal to myself
In virtue I esteem thee. To my lips
Phrases more soft my love could ne'er dictate;
My arms, my heart, if need there be, will give
Proofs more conclusive of my tenderness.—
But can ye guess the motive that impels
That miscreant thus to outrage thee?
*Virginia.* Thou said'st
He is the creature of the tyrant Appius.
*Ici.* The servile tool of all his inclinations...
*Virginia.* The reason, then, is too well known to me.
For a long time, with a flagitious love,
Has Appius burn'd for me...
*Ici.* What do I hear?...
O insolence!
*Nu.* We then are lost. O Heavens!
*Ici.* I live; and I have yet a sword.—Fear not,
O ladies, fear not, while Icilius breathes.
*Virginia.* Listen, and shudder at his guilty boldness.
Oft has he tried to practise on my virtue
By circumvention, or seductive arts:
Prayers, promises and gifts, threats, flatteries,
Whate'er is deem'd the price of chastity
To base patricians, he to me has offer'd.
The insupportable, atrocious insult
I long dissembled; in the Roman camp
My sire was station'd; and in vain, from me,
Alone, and pow'rless, had my mother heard it.—
But now my lot assumes a diff'rent aspect:
I am thy spouse, I am no longer silent.
O thou, the noblest of the Romans, thine
Not only is the' offence, but thine the vengeance.
Rivers of tears I silently have shed;
My tender mother often wept with me,
Pitying my grief, though knowing not its cause.

Behold the horrid secret.—Appius adds
Fraud now, and violence, to other arts;
He is at once the plaintiff and the judge:
I shall be taken from thee, ere I can
Be thine: ah grant, at least, that he obtain me
No otherwise than dead!

*Ici.* Ere thou be his,
Or ere he shed thy blood, shall Rome behold
Herself with blood o'erflowing: all my blood,
And that of ev'ry hero, shall be spill'd.
And who, to those who fear not death, is Appius,
But one, and one the lowest of mankind?

*Nu.* Appius, alas! too much surpasses thee
In artifice.

*Ici.* Though cruel and unjust,
Appius has hitherto at least preserved
The veil of seeming equity; all Rome
Will be assembled at the weighty trial:
We need not yet despair. We stand in need
Of fortitude and judgment: above all,
Thy father here is indispensable.
The camp is not far distant; it shall be
My first solicitude to reconduct
Him here without delay. Let us go hence;
Meanwhile, to your abode I am your guide.
A solace to you, ladies, sad, 'tis true,
But yet the only one that I can now
Propose to you, be the assured conviction,
That, if a path to justice is not open'd,
Our swords, I swear, shall open one to vengeance.

---

## ACT II.

### Scene I.

APPIUS.

*Ap.* What is this, Appius? Thou with frantic love
Inflamed?... With thy high projects for a throne
Dar'st thou to mingle an ignoble fondness

For a plebeian damsel?... Yes; since she
Presumes to turn a deaf ear to my prayers,
It now becomes a necessary step
To pow'r supreme, to make her yield to force.
But yet the people... Why should they alarm me?
Beyond all credence are the foolish people
Affrighted at the laws: if I beneath
The shelter of those laws to such a pitch
Have ris'n, to-day they surely may defend me;
First to create, and then abolish them,
Or bend them to my purpose, I have both
The pow'r and skill. Much art it will require
To consummate my scheme of pow'r; but less
Than I possess. 'Twas easier far to me,
Haughty patricians, to make tools of you,
Whose only passion is a lust of gold,
And sooner gold itself would be exhausted,
Than in yourselves the avaricious thirst:
With this I've gorged you, though not sated yet:
And, for the present, instruments I've made you
For the destruction of the multitude:
For your annihilation afterwards
The day will come; a light task this will be
To him who bought, oppress'd, degraded you.—
But see, Virginia comes to the tribunal;
With her, her mother and Icilius are,
And a vast multitude!—A haughty train;
And p'rhaps a fearful one to any man
That were not Appius: but the man who feels
Within himself that he is born to reign,
Whose will is fix'd on reigning, or on death,
Can neither change his purposes, nor fear.

## SCENE II.

APPIUS, ICILIUS, VIRGINIA, NUMITORIA, PEOPLE, LICTORS.

*Ap.* What shouts are these I hear? and dare ye thus
Approach the sacred throne decemviral?
*People.* Rome asks for justice from thee.
*Ap.* And I ask
Respect and homage from the Roman people.

Not less to check all popular misrule,
Than for the safety of the people, here,
With me, Astræa sits: it seems to me
That these tremendous symbols of my office,
With which I am surrounded, silently
Remind you of this truth. Do ye so soon
Forget the sov'reign pow'r ye gave to me?
Say, is not Rome's collected majesty
By you to me transferr'd?—Be pleased, I pray you,
To be respectful to yourselves in me.

*Nu.* Appius, thine eyes behold a wretched mother,
Whose only daughter a base miscreant wretch
Would tear from her embrace; my true-born child,
Nourish'd by me, who in my sight grew up,
The object of her father's love and mine.
There are who dare asperse her with the name
Of slave; who seek, by force, to seize her person,
To tear her from my arms. This novel outrage
Fills Rome with horror, makes it tremble, shudder,
And drives me to distraction . . . Here she is:
This is the virgin; this my only hope:
Great is her beauty; but her virtue greater.
Rome knows our manners and our characters:
There's nothing in us that resembles slav'ry.—
A most momentous question by my means
To-day will be decided: in the name
Of universal Rome I ask it of thee;
Say, Appius: are our children still our own?

*Ap.* A mother's vehemence in thee I pardon.
To thee I make reply, and, with thyself,
To universal Rome. Where there are laws,
He need not fear who has not broken them.
To tear from thee thy child, if she be thine,
Would be a vain attempt. Within my heart
Exists no motive to a partial verdict.
Before this high tribunal, hitherto,
No man appears proclaiming her a slave.—
But ye, who are ye? be he true, or false,
Tell me, who is the father of this damsel?

*Nu.* Appius, and art thou ignorant? Behold her:
Virginia is her name; a name derived

From one her father, to thyself and Rome
Well known; known better only to her foes.
We are of race plebeian, and herein
Do we exult: free was my daughter born,
Free shall she die. Of her unblemish'd birth
It may be held by thee no doubtful proof,
That of Icilius she's the chosen bride.

*Ici.* Know, more than this, that to Icilius she
Is dearer far than life, and dear as freedom.

*Ap.* 'Tis now my wish alone to know if she
Be free, or not, by birth. Being to thee
Dear, and affianced, cannot change her lot.—
Thy scowling aspect, thy ferocious words,
Imbued with bitterness, what can they do?
Rome and Icilius now shall quickly hear me,
Whate'er she be, her destiny adjudge.

## Scene III.

MARCUS, APPIUS, VIRGINIA, NUMITORIA, ICILIUS, PEOPLE, LICTORS.

*Mar.* As it behoves a citizen, I come
Before thy eminent tribunal, Appius;
Few are there in my train; the crowd immense,
Encompassing my adversaries here,
Excites no terror in my steady heart:
I adduce proofs and arguments; not cries,
And force, and weapons. Appius nothing hears
Except the right; and of my right it is
No trifling proof, that these have first infringed
All legal usage; and have, ere I spake,
Sought to invalidate an unmade claim.

*Ap.* True; this proceeding was unprecedented.

*Ici.* But let us hear: do thou now state thy cause.

*Mar.* That damsel, named from her pretended father,
Was, from a slave of mine, born in my house;
Thence, while an infant, by maternal fraud
Withdrawn from me, and for a price in gold
To Numitoria sold, who cherish'd her,
Instead of one, who, dying, left her childless.
Virginius was the first caught by the fraud;

Hence he believed her, and believes her still,
To be his daughter. I have hither brought,
And they alone escort me to this place,
Persons who witness'd both the time, the manner,
The price of this transaction. They are ready
To ratify my statement with their oaths.
*Nu.* Liars are always most disposed to swear.
Should what a Roman mother doth assert
(Yes, Roman and plebeian) less be trusted
Than the vile evidence of those who make
A wicked traffic of their perjuries?
At least, before these swear that which is not,
For a few moments hear a mother speak.
From my emotion, from my grief, my words,
And from my gestures, let the people judge
Whether or not I am the real mother.
*Ap.* I here should judge; let all the rest be silent.—
And those especially, who, of revenge,
Of love, or anger, instruments alike,
And foes alone of reason, make themselves
Of all these passions partisans in turn;
These hitherto, too frequently in Rome,
Justice have interrupted or destroy'd.
*Ici.* Say, is it just to silence evidence?
That which to no man is forbidden, thou
Forbiddest to a mother?
*Ap.* Thou wilt, then,
Teach me to judge, because thou wert a tribune?
Were I a private citizen, like thee,
I too might feel compassion at the names
Of mother and of daughter; as a judge,
I must withstand these passionate appeals:
Nor is it fitting that I should to tears,
Or threats, here yield attention, but alone
To reason's voice. The claimant's proofs first heard,
Then should I hear the feign'd or real mother.
This is the course of law: . . . but in the laws
Ye place not now your confidence; I see it.
*Ici.* Must we for ever hear the name of law,
Now that the will of few is absolute?
But since who breaks the law dares to adduce it,

I also will adduce its usages,
And say, that 'tis not lawful here to judge
The daughter, in the absence of the father.
*People.* Thou speakest well: the father should be present.
*Mar.* The father, as erewhile I mention'd to you,
Was never conscious of the mother's fraud.
*Ici.* But I of yours am conscious; and if thou
Dost not from thy vile enterprise desist,
All Rome shall hear me, with a lofty voice,
Quickly divulge your impious machinations.
*Ap.* Icilius, silent be! What dost thou hope?
In whom dost trust? In the seditious murmurs
Of a few factious miscreants, who applaud
Thy turbulent harangues? O fool, O fool,
How much art thou deceived! I on myself
Alone repose; the love, e'en as the hate,
Of those who call themselves thy partisans,
Is ineffectual and precarious too.—
The people, not the' Icilii, I esteem;
Their prating moves me not; their rage I fear not,
And their offensive flatt'ries I despise.
*Ici.* 'Tis well to scoff at those who must obey.
But on the day, when thou, throughout this Rome,
Entreated'st our vain suffrages; the day,
When thou from pride affected'st to be humble;
Magnanimous from baseness; incorrupt,
And just, and pious, from impiety;
That day, in somewhat less audacious terms,
We heard thee speak. To all of us, thou now,
Appius, art known: thou hast made too much haste,
Made haste incautiously, to reassume
Thy real character. In all respects
Thou of a tyrant hast the attributes,
And, saving prudence, all a tyrant's virtues:
Yet prudence, to all virtues paramount,
Was always held by men resembling thee,
The key-stone to the arch of tyranny.
*People.* He speaks imprudently, but speaks the truth.
*Ap.* I thought to-day, to sit in judgment here
About a slave; but now I clearly see
That I must first pass sentence on a rebel.

*Ici.* I here expected to defend alone
The free birth of a maid to me betroth'd:
My rights, the rights of Rome, the rights of all
My fellow-citizens, how blest were I
If I were able to defend to-day,
E'en at the cost of my last drop of blood!
*People.* O spirit-stirring words! O noble heart!
He is a Roman.
*Ap.* Lictors, stand around him:
O'er his audacious head suspend your axes;
And at the least attempt...
*Virginia.* It shall not be,
O Heav'ns, no, never! I will be his shield:
Direct 'gainst me your axes: let thy lictors
Drag me away a slave: my servitude
Is a small evil, and my death is none;
Provided that this hero be unhurt,
Rome's last remaining champion...
*Ap.* From his side
Tear her away. A most portentous plot
Lies here conceal'd, and threatens Rome with danger.
*Ici.* This is a dagger for herself and me,
If we're attack'd by force: no man shall dare,
While I have life, to near us.
*People.* He fears nothing!
*Ici.* Thou shalt be forced to kill me, ere this virgin
Can from this spot be dragg'd.—Ah, Romans, learn
The terrible contrivance here conceal'd:
Learn with what instant danger Rome is threaten'd;
And then let me be slain before your eyes.
This Appius burns with infamous desires
For my Virginia...
*People.* What audacity!
*Ici.* Tried to seduce her; menaces and prayers
He used; and sought at last with gold to bribe her:
The' extremest outrage that to abject virtue,
Vice, when enthroned, dares offer. But her blood
Was not patrician, thence above all price.
Now he attempts to seize on her by force;
And 'tis enough to certify the fraud,
To know the claimant's name: now for your children

Tremble, O fathers; for your wives still more
Tremble, O husbands.—Now, what more remains
That we can lose? Our ill-defended lives.
But what is life, where honor and our children,
Our country, and the heart that makes it dear,
Our liberty, our laws, are taken from us?

*People.* For us, and for our children, liberty
Or death.

*Ap.* This is a lie . . .

*People.* Or liberty
Or death.

*Nu.* Suspend awhile your vehemence,
O gen'rous people! Heav'n forbid that one
Who springs from me, should be the fatal cause
Of shedding rivers of pure Roman blood.
I ask alone, and in your name I ask it,
That in this cause Virginius may be heard.
From the insufferable, false aspersion,
E'en in his presence, and before you all,
If time be granted, I shall clear myself.

*Ap.* Cease, cease your importunities, or I,
The stern executor of law, will show
That law in all its fiercest majesty.
Ye rouse yourselves in vain to a vain task;
There is no need of your audacious cries;
They are as useless justice to obtain,
As they are impotent to baffle it.
Icilius lies, and I will prove it.—He,
Of ev'ry faction, ev'ry broil the head,
Long has he panted to shed civil blood.
He was your enemy, as he was ours,
When he was tribune. To destroy the senate,
Deceive the people, to vile servitude
Reduce us all, was his flagitious aim:
Hence tow'rds us is his rage. It was your will
To yield to the Decemvirate the reins
Of this most desolate, afflicted city:
Weary yourselves of impious fatal discord,
Ye made me what I am. Returning peace,
So ardently desired, scarce lifts her head;
And at a nod, a word, of him, the worst,

The basest of the citizens of Rome,
Shall I behold you eager for fresh tumults?
*People.* 'Tis true; he is our judge: but let us hear
The answer of this brave one.
*Ici.* Yes, 'tis true,
A legislator and a judge ye made him;
But now his year of office hath expired;
And since that period he hath made himself
By artifice your judge, by force your tyrant.
He universal servitude calls peace:
This is not peace, but a deep sleep of death.
The blood of our best citizens in streams
Runs in the camp: who, think ye, drink that blood?
Our enemies perchance?—The valiant Siccius,
He who dared in the camp invoke the name
Of ancient liberty, did he not fall
In a pretended contest, in the back,
By an insidious knife decemviral,
Transfix'd?
*Ap.* The rebel Siccius then presumed . . .
*Ici.* Why should I speak of murders? They are known.
Blood they have not as yet diffused in Rome;
But gold with lavish hand, which afterwards
Will be the dreadful price of human blood.
He is accounted now a foe of Rome,
Who, as a Roman should, both speaks and thinks.
The virgins see themselves unjustly robb'd
Of husbands, parents, liberty, and fame.
What do ye now expect? The fearful yoke,
Far worse than any death, upon yourselves
By yourselves fasten'd; which scarce leaves to you
Man's character, or prostituted name;
Why falls it not to earth, by you destroy'd?
Say, are ye Romans? your professions still
Are worthy of the name; but not your deeds.
Say, is there need of blood to goad you on?
Already in the tyrant's countenance
I read the terrible decree of death.
Ye satellites of blood, be expeditious;
Why do your axes slumber? Appius, this,

This is the head, which, sever'd from my body,
The liberty of Rome shall take away,
Or ratify for ever. Appius, tremble,
While it remains there; thou shalt ever hear it
Proclaiming vengeance, liberty, and arms.
If Rome contains no Roman but myself,
A second Brutus to a second Tarquin,
Living or dead, am I. Behold, I fly not;
I neither flinch nor tremble: here am I . . .
*Virginia.* O Heav'ns! O Appius! mitigate thy rage:
Shed not his life-blood with your axes: hear;
The people shudder, nor will they permit it.
Thou menacest a life of too much value:
Ah, take my life; the injury to thee,
To Rome, will then be less . . .
*Ici.* What art thou doing?
Dost thou entreat? Entreat an Appius too?
And in the presence of myself and Rome?
If thou dost love me, learn to banish fear:
And if I here, as a first pledge of love,
Should offer thee my life, do thou receive it
As is befitting for a Roman woman,
Free-born, and to Icilius now betroth'd.
*Nu.* O dreadful moment! Appius, I entreat thee
Yet once, once more; first let Virginius come;
Let him be waited for, let him be heard.
*People.* Appius, ah, let Virginius here be summon'd;
We all would have it so . . .
*Ap.* I more than all:
I wish him present here; so shall he be:
I, in the forum, by to-morrow's dawn,
Expect to meet you all.—Although by law
His life is forfeited, I do not now
Condemn Icilius; or ye might suspect
That he alarm'd me: for the present, then,
Be his life spared, and at the mighty judgment
Let him assist; if so he will, in arms;
And ye with him in arms. Ye first shall hear me
Pass sentence on the slave, and then on him.
To see this I invite you here; secure
In his own virtue, Appius trembles not.

*Mar.* But the law wills, that meanwhile in my care
The dubious slave shall be.
*Ici.* The vile abode
Of a bribed satellite, shall that be e'er
The' asylum of an honest virgin? Never!
There is no law iniquitous like this;
Or, if there be, let it at once be broken.
*Mar.* Who meanwhile will be surety for this damsel?
*People.* All, all: we pledge ourselves.
*Ici.* And I with them.
Let us depart: to-morrow's rising sun
Shall witness all of us assembled here,
Sure of ourselves and of our wives, or dead.

## SCENE IV.

APPIUS, MARCUS.

*Ap.* —She loves Icilius? is betroth'd to him?—
Hence more inflexibly in my design
And more immutably, shall I persist.
Go, headstrong rebel, go, and in the people
Trust, while I...
*Mar.* Appius, didst thou ever see
The people more inflamed, or more disposed
To insurrection?
*Ap.* Nothing did I see
Except Virginia; and she shall be mine.—
Thou p'rhaps wouldst tell me that I ought to fear?
Dar'st thou say this to Appius? When did he,
Who fear'd the people, ever govern them?
With their first impulses to temporize;
Their second to anticipate; to wear
An aspect of perpetual confidence;
Subtly with haughty threatenings to mix
Seductive flatt'ries: these are the chief arts
By which I am now what I am; and here
Greater than any man ere was before
Shall make myself.
*Mar.* So long as lives Icilius,
In vain thou threaten'st or seducest them.
In him, and in his ardent eloquence,

His boldness as a tribune, they discover,
Their ancient rights recalling, pow'rful fuel
To feed again an unextinguish'd flame,
Which now breaks forth in enterprising breasts.
*Ap.* While there remains aught else for me to do,
Icilius still shall live. 'Tis oftentimes
Not profitless to make parade of mercy:
Yes, let him live; and let the people see,
How little he can thwart the schemes of Appius.
Thou shalt behold that fickle people change
Its timid love to hatred and contempt;
And turn its weapons to Icilius' ruin;
Yes, thou shalt see that very populace
Made instrumental to his punishment.
*Mar.* But ah, what courage to the multitude,
What vigor to Icilius, the return
Will of Virginius bring! . . .
*Ap.* But, the return
Of this Virginius; . . . dost expect it, then?—
Come and behold, how, having once gain'd time,
Appius wants not the skill to use it well.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

VIRGINIUS.

*Virginius.* At last I have arrived,—O, with what speed!
It seem'd as if the pity of a father,
Fear, hope, and love, had wing'd my very feet.—
My fears increase as I approach my dwelling.
'Tis almost night: I hasten to embrace,
If I possess her yet, my only daughter,
The only comfort of my weary age.

## Scene II.

ICILIUS, VIRGINIUS.

*Ici.* O!... whom do I behold?... Virginius is't?
The gods of Rome have sent thee to our aid.
Methinks thy coming here so rapidly
Is an auspicious omen.
*Virginius.* From the camp
I flew, Icilius;... Do I come in time?
I scarcely dare to ask it: am I yet
A father?
*Ici.* Hitherto thy daughter lives
Unhurt, and free.
*Virginius.* O unexpected joy!
Belovèd daughter!... then at last... I breathe.
*Ici.* Thou hast a daughter; but in tears she lives
With her afflicted mother. They exist
Trembling, of their approaching destiny
In horrible suspense; alternately
They, in their anxious bosoms, wish and fear
The moment of thy coming.
*Virginius.* O ye gods!
Then ye have listen'd to my fervent prayers;
Ye who have lent to my exhausted frame
An unaccustom'd strength, by means of which
I have arrived in time to save my daughter,
Or for her to expire.
*Ici.* I also will
Save, or die for her. But thou art a father;
Thou hast a weapon not on me bestow'd,
And with the people it may much prevail;
Paternal tears.
*Virginius.* But say: of our affairs
What is the posture now?
*Ici.* The self-same spot
Where now thou standest, was, this very morn,
The scene of this iniquitous transaction:
Here first the fray began. A Marcus spoke,
And, with a thousand subterfuges, strove
To hide from all the cruel lust of Appius.
Whate'er was needful to delude the people

All was resorted to; bribed witnesses,
Claimants, and laws, and precedents, and proofs.
Already Appius thought to give effect,
Without an obstacle, to the vile sentence;
I dared the first to manifest the fraud,
And for Virginia claim'd her father's presence.—
O what a fearful shout the furious people
Sent up to Heav'n, when I pronounced thy name!
An unperturb'd deportment he assumed;
But in his heart, and in his ev'ry vein,
Trembled the impious judge. At length he paused,
And promised to await thee.—Now I fear'd
That, thy return to intercept, the wretch
Might plant an ambush'd train; and thus, at last,
That to thy daughter, to myself, and Rome,
Thou mightst be ever lost... At last thou'rt come;
And not in vain the gods thy safety will'd.
He hath assign'd the sixth hour of to-day
For the vile sentence: let the rising sun,
Among the multitude, a trembling father,
See thee then mix'd, soliciting with tears
Thy genuine offspring. Nor do thou elsewhere,
Save in the people's hearts, for pity seek:
The people only to the father can
Restore his daughter, to myself my spouse,
To herself honor, liberty to Rome.

*Virginius.* Icilius, thou know'st well, how much I love thee...

My choice of thee as son-in-law proves this.
Within my unspoil'd heart there yet remain
Three objects of pre-eminent regard:
Rome, my own kindred, and thy rectitude.
I pledge myself, if need there be, to brave
With thee each peril, each high enterprise...
But thy impetuous hardihood, thy soul
Magnanimously prodigal of life...

*Ici.* Can virtue then be carried to excess?

*Virginius.* Yes, when 'tis vain; when it betrays to ruin
Him who possesses it, and profits not
Him who doth not possess it.—I now hear thee,

Icilius, with a noble rage inflamed,
Thy suff'ring country, and my injured daughter,
In one confound . . .
*Ici.* And should they be disjoin'd?
The cause is one: thou art thyself a father,
And dost not thou feel this? or Rome is Rome,
Then thou hast there a daughter; I have there
Life and a consort; or 'tis but a slave,
Then we have nothing there except a sword.
*Virginius.* But too emphatically now indeed
Is Rome a slave: I fear for her through thee;
For ev'ry present shock exasperates
Her deep and dang'rous wounds; I fear lest thou,
'Mid diff'rent measures, as the most secure,
Shouldst choose the most tremendous. Ah, could we
At once my daughter save, and not disturb
The safety of my country . . .
*Ici.* Hold thy peace:
What name dar'st thou pronounce? Is there a country,
Where ONE alone doth will, and all obey?
Penates, children, honor, country, freedom,
Once precious names, ah, ill do ye become
The mouths of those who are, like us, enslaved,
While that ONE breathes who makes them all his prey.—
Now slaughter, rapine, violence, and shame,
Are inconsiderable evils; worse,
A far worse evil is the palsying fear
That weighs upon the universal heart.
Scarce dare the anxious and mistrustful people
Look at each other, much less converse hold:
So deep is their suspicion and their dread,
Brother fears brother, father fears his son;
The base are bribed, the good are overwhelm'd,
The weak neglected, and the valiant slain,
And all degraded: see what are become
Those once proud citizens of Rome, of yore
The terror, now the scorn of Italy.
*Virginius.* Thy words are true, and from mine eyes they draw
Not only tears of sorrow, but of rage . . .

But what, 'mid such a multitude of slaves,
Can two alone perform?
*Ici.* Sharp vengeance take,
And die like men.
*Virginius.* The recent tyranny
Is not establish'd yet: we may attempt,
But never can we consummate revenge.
What cruelties, e'en in the very camp,
Dare the decemvirs now not perpetrate?
But yet the choicest of our warriors e'en,
Who there are station'd, arm'd, what do they do?
They shudder, and they act not. I desire
The lying allegations to confute,
And save my daughter from the claws of Appius:
If it be indispensable, I am
Most willing, and I ought, to die: not so
For thee; if thou wert dead, who then remains
To rescue Rome, or to avenge us?
*Ici.* We:
Living, by arms; or by example, dead.—
More cannot be endured: we have adherents;
Though all may be abased, all are not base:
The daring of the many stands in need
Of one to dare the first: that one am I.—
This is the field in which we're call'd to fight;
Here let us seek for honor or for death.
In following longer our oppressor's banners,
Thou wilt but purchase to thyself disgrace:
Our foes are in the heart of Rome; in Rome
Then let us combat: and although the issue
May be precarious, certain is the glory:
Need I say more to thee?
*Virginius.* No: I am always
Prepared to die; and now I only grieve
That I have lived too long. I hope my cries,
And my conclusive reasons, will avail
To check e'en Appius: Rome, meanwhile, shall see me
Through all the streets, displaying to the people
My bosom full of honorable scars:
And Rome I will adjure, and all her gods;
Adjure the blood which in her cause I've spill'd,

Both of my own and of her enemies.
A mournful father, trembling, grey with age,
To ev'ry father I will tell the tale
Of my misfortunes: finally, by me,
Each warrior bold shall learn the recompense
That Rome awards to those who fight her battles.—
This, this I swear to do . . . But O, to stain
My sword with civil blood, and to involve
So many innocents in my hard lot,
Involve in vain . . .
*Ici.* Yet, p'rhaps, thou wilt be forced
To do e'en this: our children, liberty,
Deserve, methinks, that we should shed the blood
Of more than of one citizen. If they
Die valiantly, they are too good for slaves;
If cowardly, they merit not to live.—
But let us now press forward, to embrace
The two unhappy women: sure I am,
That thou, from their affliction, wilt derive
A fury great as, greater far than, mine;
And that in thee a comrade I shall find,
Whatever be the enterprise.

## Scene III.

NUMITORIA, VIRGINIA, ICILIUS, VIRGINIUS.

*Nu.* O sight! . . .
If I see well . . . No, I am not deceived;
'Tis he, 'tis he; O joy! My own Virginius!
*Virginia.* Father!
*Virginius.* O Heav'ns! . . . My daughter, . . . is it true? . . .
Consort! . . . I clasp you to my bosom? Ah! . . .
I feel myself o'ercome . . .
*Virginia.* Yes, I embrace thee,
Since I'm allow'd to call thee father still.
*Nu.* Anxious for thee, and doubtful of thy coming,
A longer tarriance here was death to us;
Hence we set out, impatient till we met thee . . .
*Virginia.* Trembling and apprehensive . . . Now at least

Distant from thee I shall not breathe my last.
I fear'd that I should never more behold thee.
*Ici.* Unhappy father! he can scarcely breathe,
Much less find words.
*Nu.* Alas, how diff'rent now
Is thy return to what it was before,
When from the camp thou cam'st so many a time
The conqueror of our foes! Bent to the earth,
Now I behold, alas, thy honor'd brow,
Erewhile with laurels, now with grief, weigh'd down,
And black and fatal thoughts: thou art reduced
To such extremity, that thou dost wish
That thou hadst never had or wife or daughter;
Though formerly, in truth, the much-loved objects,
For whom thy glory and thy life were dear.
*Virginius.* . . . Women; to be a husband and a father,
I ne'er shall grieve; most blessèd are these ties,
Although a bitter penalty awaits them.
If it must be ascribed to guilt in Rome
To be possess'd of daughters, I, in this,
Would first be criminal; of this abuse
Would first obtain redress. Upon the day
When I became a husband, Rome was free;
Free on the day, when thou didst give to me
The sure and single pledge of our chaste love,
Mine own Virginia; ah, yes, mine, too much!
Born, and brought up, beneath the sacred shade
Of thine own country's laws, thou wert, O daughter,
My only hope: the magistrates were then
The guardians of our lives, our wealth, our honor:
Are they not now become their plunderers? . . .
Ah, daughter, . . . check thy tears; . . . compel me not
To weep.—'Tis not because I weeping deem
Unworthy of a Roman soldier; no,
When tainted honor, or the outraged laws,
Or a wrong'd daughter, from his struggling heart
Wring the unwilling tear; . . . but with these tears
Redress is not procured.
*Virginia.* And thinkest thou,
Had I been, haply, of the stronger sex,
That I, a child of thine, to those who dared

Insult me with the epithet of slave,
Had made rejoinder with effeminate tears?
Weak, and a woman, am I; and I lose
My consort, and my father, all, yes, all . . .
*Ici.* Thou hast lost nothing yet. Hope yet remains:
In thy defence thou wilt the people have,
The gods themselves, and us: but if in vain;
If there remain no means for thee of safety,
Except with us to die, . . . I speak it trembling, . . .
Thy parents speak it to thee by their silence, . . .
Thou, then, with us shalt die. Thy noble hand
I with my sword will arm, with my own blood
Yet warm and reeking: and thou then shalt hear
My last free words, recalling to thy mind,
That thou wert daughter of a valiant Roman,
Thyself free, Roman, and my spouse.—The thought
That freezes my sad heart is happily
Yet premature.
*Virginia.* It is the only thought
That can sustain my life.—O! if thou see'st
My tears, 'tis not my destiny I weep,
But thine. For loftiest enterprises born,
Thou wert design'd to be the pride of Rome:
I weep to see thee, and in vain, reduced
For my obscure and private wrongs to combat;
To see, for thee, each path to genuine fame
Closed up for ever; finally, to see
In thee a soul so eminently Roman,
Since Rome is now no more.
*Virginius.* And thou art not
My daughter? Let those hear thee who deny it!
*Nu.* She is the prop of our declining age,
The only prop. O daughter! I would die,
Rather than lose thee, many a thousand times.
*Ici.* Beloved Virginia, strong that love must be
That is express'd so strongly; of us both
'Tis worthy: similar to mine it glows.
But these hard times forbid all interchange
Of soft affection. Our sole mutual pledge
Of conjugal and of paternal love,
Must be a promise of united death.

*Virginius.* Ah, my own children! . . . Must it then be so?
And must such virtue perish? . . . Numitoria,
And those the real sons of Rome, and ours,
That might from them be born, a glorious race,
Shall we ne'er clasp them in our trembling arms? . . .
O what a seed of heroes dies with them,
If plants like these, so noble, lofty, gen'rous,
Be doom'd indeed to perish prematurely!

*Ici.* If we had children, we must weep indeed,
But in another guise: to a sad pass
We should be brought; or forced to leave them slaves . . .
My children slaves! . . . Ah! I would kill them first.—
I'm not a father; if I were . . .

*Virginius.* Thy words
Across me flash like lightning terrible:
I do beseech thee, cease . . .

*Nu.* I am a mother,
And feel what thou dost say in all its force.
Reduced to tears alone, why have not we,
Sad mothers, strength proportion'd to our grief!

*Ici.* Fathers and husbands have like grief to yours,
And greater boldness. Still do I retain
The hope to rescue her. Perchance alone,
Virginius and myself in Rome now stand;
But we suffice to rouse in a whole people
Passion and life.

*Virginius.* Alas! 'tis not in words,
(However strong and passionate they be,)
To rouse a people who in fetters languish;
Or to elicit from their slumb'ring soul
Actions of steady masculine revenge:
Excess of injury and blood alone
Can work this miracle in callous hearts.
'Twas indispensable to rescue Rome
From the vile Tarquins, that a guiltless woman,
Basely defiled, by her own hands should fall
To earth, in her own blood, alas, immersed!

*Virginia.* If it be requisite that guiltless blood,
But not contaminated yet, be shed,
To rouse this people from its lethargy,
Strike: husband, father, strike: behold my breast.—

Am I too dear to you? fear ye to plunge
The weapon in my bosom? I fear not;
Give, give the sword to me. Collected Rome
My death shall witness: such a spectacle
Will re-illume their ancient love of freedom;
The banner of revenge shall flout the air
Empurpled with my blood: the men of war
Shall in it emulously dip their swords,
And in the bosoms of the tyrants vile
Shall plunge those swords e'en to the very hilt.

*Virginius.* Ah! daughter, . . . thou dost now awake in me
An unaccustom'd sense of dread! . . . alas! . . .

*Ici.* Tear not by little and by little thus
A father's heart already truly Roman.
What boots it to exhort each other now
To death? From our great ancestors are we
Degenerate?—We shall have ascertain'd,
In a few hours, if death shall be our lot.
Thou, O Virginius, with thy wife and daughter,
Do thou return to see, once more, thy dwelling.
This is the last night, p'rhaps, in which to thee
So great a consolation will be granted.
O hapless father! transient is the time
For the indulgence of thy deep affections.

*Virginius.* O bitter night! . . . Let us depart! Icilius,
By dawn to-morrow thou shalt see me here.

*Ici.* Here first shall I be, to dispose a few,
But hardy spirits, to sublime endeavor.
Now go: thou also wilt be well convinced
To-morrow, that no plan remains for us,
Save mine; the plan of blood.—Alive or dead,
O spouse, we shall be fully blest to-morrow.

*Virginia.* Alive or dead, with thee I'm always blest.

## ACT IV.

### SCENE I.

APPIUS, MARCUS.

*Ap.* Virginius is in Rome?
*Mar.* 'Tis but too true.
*Ap.* Hast thou beheld him?
*Mar.* With these eyes I saw him.
Thou also wilt behold him here ere long,
For he is seeking thee.
*Ap.* How from the camp
Could he depart, if an express command
Of mine detain'd him there?
*Mar.* Thy interdict
Perchance arrived too late; the generals
Perchance gave slow obedience...
*Ap.* The commands
Of Appius, who was ever slow to follow?
I see it was Icilius who forestall'd me...
Thence shall he reap the recompense he merits.
Already, ere Virginia had been dragg'd
To the tribunal, had a messenger
Been to her sire dispatch'd. At his approach
The aspect of our enterprise is changed:
Yet not for this...
*Mar.* Already, bathed in tears,
The parents, with their daughter, through the streets,
Through ev'ry pathway, run as supplicants,
Muffled in squalid garb, and in their course
They leave behind a formidable track
Of tears and indignation: here, perchance
Ere long, thou wilt behold them.—But, in guise
Far different to theirs, by multitudes,
Increasing instantaneously, begirt,
The fierce Icilius doth, throughout the city,
Clad in habiliments of battle, speed.
He menaces, adjures, exhorts, attests.
The mother's tears, the maiden's loveliness,
The hoary valor of the warlike father,

The factious outcries of their former tribune,
A formidable aliment provide
To a more formidable flame; take heed.
*Ap.* Do thou take heed, and tremble for thyself;
And if thou wilt, for me: since for myself
I shall not tremble.—Go: I see Virginius
Approaching me: leave me with him alone.

## SCENE II.

APPIUS, VIRGINIUS.

*Ap.* And darest thou thy colors and the camp
Abandon thus? The Roman soldiers, then,
Do now at will, come, go, or quit their posts?
*Virginius.* There is a reason that might supersede
The strictest laws. Yet in this exigence
Those austere laws of military duty,
Which I too long have kept, have not been broken.
I ask'd for leave of absence, and obtain'd it.
I quit my station in my daughter's cause; . . .
And this thou know'st.
*Ap.* What canst thou say for her,
Except that which the laws suggest to me
In language more imperative than thine?
*Virginius.* Hear me.—I am a father, to my cost!
And as a father tremble. Unelated
Do I behold the people crowd around me,
And in my favor menacingly shout:
I know thy pow'r is great; that to attempt
By force to cope with it were hazardous;
And that I may precipitate this Rome
In bitterest calamities, and fail
To rescue from thy grasp my hapless daughter.
Then, Appius, menace not; I know how far
Thou hast the pow'r to injure me: but think,
Ah, think a little, to what risk immense
Thou dost expose thyself, if thou persist. . .
*Ap.* Are these, then, prayers or menaces? Am I
The sole and absolute disposer here
Of what the laws decree? Have I the pow'r
To tear a daughter from her real father?

Rather should I, and such is my design,
Secure her to that father with my blood:
What avail prayers, if she be not thy child?—
The rancor, which thy words but ill conceal,
I know from whence it comes: Icilius 'tis
Who with his dark suspicions clouds thy heart;
He, who makes calumny the instrument
Of his ambitious views. To such a miscreant
Canst thou yield credence? and canst thou, who art
The most exemplary of citizens,
Choose for thy son-in-law the worst of rebels?
Together with him wilt thou lose thy daughter?—
The ruin of Icilius is decreed;
And as he hopes to have, he will not gain
An honorable death. Clandestinely
He against Rome conspires; and cherishes
Abominable schemes. He calls us tyrants;
But in his breast he nourishes the thought
Of a far fiercer tyranny than ours.
He would destroy the senate: afterwards
Enslave the people; yet he talks of freedom.
More deadly in proportion is his poison,
As 'tis conceal'd beneath a specious semblance.
Here doth he raise the signal of a rebel,
And there he breathes the whispers of a traitor.
I to his arms, will arms oppose in turn;
And thwart his treason by preventive arts.
All is foreseen already. Thou know'st not
His dark contrivances; to his designs
He fain would have thee instrument and veil,
But never a companion in his plunder.
That thou dost love, e'en as thou lov'st thy daughter,
Thy country, well he knows; hence he affects
To be the' avenger of thy daughter's cause,
But with his comrades afterwards he laughs
At thy credulity. From thee he hides it;
To them he scruples not to show himself
That which he is in truth, Rome's base oppressor.

*Virginius.* Daughters are torn from their afflicted mothers;
From fathers torn, who in their country's service

The prime of life have spent; the magistrates
Appal us more than e'en our enemies:
Then how can Rome one more oppressor dread?
*Ap.* Icilius, well I know it, with a tale
Of idle love dares to asperse my name;
What are his proofs? His boundless insolence,
The cries of the besotted multitude,
And my unwary clemency, are proofs.
This Marcus is my client; he demands
Thy daughter; I must, then, that daughter love,
And be her ravisher. Choice arguments!
*Virginius.* This doth Icilius only, then, affirm?
Others attest the same.
*Ap.* Perchance the maiden,
Induced by him.
*Virginius.* There are too many proofs,
Whose utt'rance shame, not less than rage, forbids.
Nor is it a light proof that thou dost strive
To clear thyself to me.
*Ap.* Thou art resolved
With the conspirators to join thyself.
*Virginius.* I am resolved to die, or keep my daughter.
*Ap.* I love thee, and I therefore wish thee safe.
*Virginius.* And wherefore lovest me?
*Ap.* Rome may require
Thy arm in her defence: ah, leave, I pray thee,
Icilius to his fate; leave him to perish;
He alone merits it. We prize thy life...
*Virginius.* I understand thee; thou dost deem me fit
For servitude...
*Ap.* No: equal I esteem thee,
If not superior e'en, to any Roman:
And, as a proof of this, scarce shall thy feet
Have reach'd the camp, ere thou shalt be promoted
To a supreme command...
*Virginius.* And dost thou dare
To bribe me to compliance? Shall I owe
That meed to Appius' favor, which alone
Is due to valor? To acquire thy favor,
What crime have I committed? From the camp,
Alas! e'en from the camp is honor fled;
This Rome, and, what is worse, Rome's foes know well;

Those, who, a boast, not heretofore enjoy'd,
May now exult in, to have pierced the back
Of Romans more than one.—'Tis true, the wounds,
The honor'd wounds, which on my breast I show thee,
Such as the Roman mothers bless'd erewhile
When they beheld them on their sons, are now
Received unluckily, and will assume
A less imposing aspect, since we fight
Beneath thy banners.—I have pledged myself
To Rome, by an inviolable oath,
That, if I ever to the camp return,
Rome shall be born again.—Thy words to me
Are fraught with craft; my heart is on my lips.
A soldier, father, citizen, am I:
Of evils foreign to myself I speak not;
While Rome endures them, I endure them also:
But my Virginia . . .

*Ap.* 'Twas not I that first
Incited Marcus to contest his claim,
Though thus by lying fame I am aspersed:
Yet, p'rhaps, I can dissuade him from the project.
For thee I feel compassion: and perchance,
Without commotion, or the chance of blood,
I might restore thy daughter to thy arms,
If thou didst feel for her a genuine pity:
But thou dost thirst for blood; dost wish to see
Thy daughter also wedded to Icilius,
And wouldst involve that daughter, with thyself,
In the destruction of a miscreant traitor.

*Virginius.* Canst thou . . . restore her . . . to me?

*Ap.* If thou wilt
Refuse her to Icilius.

*Virginius.* She is his
By a sworn compact.

*Ap.* He'll release thee from it
To-day, by death. Go, go; there now remains
But a few moments for mature reflection.
Thy child is thine, if not Icilius' spouse:
But if she be his wife, no pow'r of mine
Can hinder her from perishing with him.

*Virginius.* . . . Unhappy sire! . . . To what am I reduced? . . .

## Scene III.

APPIUS.

*Ap.* —He is too much a Roman.—Appius e'en
Himself might fear, if Rome within her walls
Had many such as he. But two, no more,
Two are the Romans worthy of my hatred:
And one is agèd, and he is a father;
Strong fetters these: his own rash insolence
Shall be the engine of the other's ruin.
To make him victim of his headstrong passion
Shall be my project . . . But, what do I see?
Behold Virginia and her mother come
Amid the people's tears.—I now must try
Or to intimidate, or to seduce them.

## Scene IV.

APPIUS, NUMITORIA, VIRGINIA.

*Ap.* While time remains to you, and it is short,
Withdraw a little from that boist'rous train,
Which rather may endanger than protect you.—
Ye see me not at present as a judge:
Approach, Virginia; hear me; thou wilt see me
Wearing ere long a diff'rent aspect here.

*Virginia.* Hast thou, O Appius, spoken with my father?

*Nu.* Hast thou repented? Hast thou, taught by fear,
Learn'd to be more discreet?

*Ap.* By fear, say'st thou? . . .
No, but by pity. Hear me; and my words
Will prove my heart is not impress'd by fear.
Virginia, I do love thee and confirm it:
No force avails to snatch thee from my pow'r;
But many reasons why thou shouldst submit . . .

*Virginia.* Is this thy change? Ah, mother, let us go! . . .

*Ap.* Remain; and hear me.—Art thou, then, Virginia,
For thy Icilius so infatuated?
In him, if enterprising ardor please thee,
Am I perchance less passionate than he?
Does his rank charm thee? Though he be once more
A tribune, could he thus with me compare?

Dost love a heart that's free, and lofty feelings?
Does not my breast a nobler heart contain,
More independent feelings? I, who mean
To make himself, and all his partisans,
Submit to my authority; while they
Obey my nod . . .
*Nu.* And dost thou thus presume
To show thy purposes? . . .
*Ap.* I am advanced
So far; so little now remains to do,
That I dare manifest them openly.
How great I am, your thought can ne'er conceive.
The tongue of Marcus, as the sword of thousands,
Is under my control. If thou refuse
To be Icilius' spouse, I instantly
The process set aside.
*Virginia.* Abandon him? . . .
Ah, rather . . .
*Nu.* O audacious turpitude!
O miscreant! . . .
*Ap.* Dost thou think that his regard
Can bear comparison with mine? His tales
Of liberty, his tribunitial office,
Conspiracies and tumults, are his passion.
Long was he silent; now he deems thyself
A means once more of re-installing him:
His turbulent ambition makes him speak,
And not his love for thee.—But grant, that I
Should also, in this undertaking, brave
Imminent danger; thence thou mayst infer
How mighty is the ardor of my love:
Pow'r, life, and fame, for thee have I endanger'd.
All am I ready, for thy dear love's sake,
To sacrifice; Icilius from that love
Hopes all to gain.
*Virginia.* No more.—Icilius vile,
By this comparison of him with thee,
Or thyself noble, thou canst never make.
Short is the parallel: within himself
He has the all, of which thou hast no part:
Nothing of him can ever be in thee:

As much as I hate thee, I love Icilius.—
Why dost thou speak of love? Dar'st thou bestow
A name so sacred on thy impious lust?
Not that I e'er would be so; but in thought
It never yet hath enter'd in thy heart
To seek me as a spouse . . .
*Ap.* Some day perchance . . .
*Virginia.* Think not that I shall ever . . .
*Nu.* Thou didst mean
To mock us: O indignity! . . .
*Virginia.* Thou miscreant,
To no condition canst thou make me listen . . .
*Ap.* 'Tis well: thou shalt at last fall in my pow'r,
All sprinkled with the life-blood of thy lover.
*Virginia.* O Heav'ns! . . .
*Ap.* Yes, sprinkled with thy lover's blood; . . .
And with thy sire's.
*Nu.* O impious! . . .
*Virginia.* What! My father!
*Ap.* All. At my nod falls whomsoe'er I will:
The fate of Siccius once proclaim'd this truth.
One hour is wanting now, before I give
A signal for the massacre.
*Virginia.* Icilius! . . .
One hour! one hour alone! . . . O Appius, pity! . . .
My lover . . . and my father . . .
*Nu.* Two such heroes
Expiring at thy nod? And dost thou think
That thence thy pow'r will be impregnable? . . .
*Ap.* And should the whole with me be overturn'd,
Would such an universal crash restore
Virginius and Icilius?
*Virginia.* Appius, thou
Dost make me tremble . . .
*Nu.* . . . Ah! . . . do listen to me.
What if I supplicate? . . .
*Ap.* With but one word
She saves the lives of both.
*Virginia.* . . . Suspend, O Appius, . . .
For this one day the blow; . . . I do conjure thee.—
Meanwhile I'll banish ev'ry thought of marriage . . .

Sever'd from me, ah! let Icilius live;
I will endeavor from my heart to tear
His image . . . and from him will I withdraw
My hopes, all placed in him so many years:
Perchance . . . meanwhile . . . the pow'r of time . . . alas!
What can I more? Ah! let Icilius live:
Before thy feet I prostrate fall.—But I,
Alas! what do I do? . . . what do I say?—
Time will still make me hate thee more and more,
And more Icilius love.—I will fear nothing;
We're Romans: and my lover and my father
Would never keep a life that was the fruit
Of their dishonor: if they once are slain,
Nothing remains for me to lose. In time
Wilt thou not give to me a sword, my mother?
*Nu.* Come . . . come . . . O daughter . . . gods there are in Heaven,
Avengers of oppressèd innocence;
Come: let us trust in them . . .
*Virginia.* Ah, do thou be
The prop of my weak frame; . . . my footsteps falter . . .

## Scene V.

APPIUS.

*Ap.* And am I baffled yet?—To me in truth
Fresh obstacles are only fresh incentives:
Plebeian beauty, who hadst scarcely warm'd,
Unaided by events, this heart of mine
With a slight, transient flame, now that for thee
Rome shudders with disdain, immoveably,
Profoundly in my bosom thou art fix'd;
Now much as is the very pow'r I grasp at,
Nay more, art thou essential to my peace.—
But the sixth hour approaches. Let us see
If all is ready to convince the people,
That in themselves no longer, but in me,
Is centred all the majesty of Rome.

## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

VIRGINIUS, ICILIUS, WITH FOLLOWERS.

*Virginius.* The fatal hour arrives. Icilius, see,
On ev'ry side the forum teems with arms.
And all around . . .
*Ici.* Close by my side I see
A train, though less, of greater courage, . . . maybe.
*Virginius.* Dost thou confide in them?
*Ici.* —I in myself
Confide.
*Virginius.* In me, as much as in thyself,
Thou ought'st to trust. Before the time I come
A little space; for I was well assured
That I should find thee here.—But, in few words,
Permit me, while there is a time for speech,
To question thee concerning thy designs.—
Should we unloose the chains decemviral,
How am I to accost thee? By what name,
So long as thou'rt within the walls of Rome?
*Ici.* A Roman, citizen, and free; the peer
Of ev'ry Roman; only than the laws
Less great; greater alone than any king.—
But thou suggestest a tremendous doubt
To me, a Roman, Roman as thou art;
But thou dost not offend me: in thy breast
The vile suspicion never had arisen,
No never, had not Appius waked it there.
*Virginius.* Infamous times! The mighty condescend,
With their subordinates, to practise fraud.
I did not think it; . . . but so well did Appius
Color his phrases . . . What avails it now?
If yet I trusted him, one look of thine
Fills me with more of settled confidence
Than all the oaths of Appius. Ah, the miscreant!
I swear . . . it is as possible that I
Should e'er to thee be faithless and thy cause,
As it is possible that thou shouldst be
By thine own heart, by thine own sword betray'd.

*Ici.* Thee do I trust; I trust in thee alone,
No, not in these: though they an hour ago
Fiercely to me, and Rome, did pledge their faith.
Fear, calumny, and gold, may take them from me;
The arms of Appius all; unknown to heroes,
But yet too efficacious. Now, let come
What may come, if the tyrant persevere
In his iniquitous designs, he dies.
That he is apprehensive, he has shown
By his attempt to practise on thy faith:
In the corruption of the timid people
Does he confide; too sure a cause for trust.
If Appius die, nine tyrants yet remain,
Less powerful indeed, and all dispersed;
Yet in whose hands are placed the nerve of Rome,
Both of our armies. Freedom thus appears,
Which p'rhaps few wish, and thou alone deservest,
But too, too, doubtful: vengeance thus alone
Seems to me certain. I see all the danger:
And for this reason wish the more to brave it.

*Virginius.* O great of heart! In thee this day will Rome
See herself die, or rise again in thee.
Yield only to my green old age to-day
The honor of the signal for the combat:
Be mine to indicate the when and how
We are to draw our swords. Fix on my eye
Thy steady eye, and on thy sword thy hand:
Meanwhile the aspect of the' assembled people
We will observe: 'twill be, perchance, expedient,
To make the blow more sure, to feign at first
A certain gentleness: and I beseech thee,
Let all thy movements be controll'd by mine.

*Ici.* Now thou art Roman and a father. Give
The signal for attack; and thou shalt see
My strokes more rapid than the lightning's flash.

*Virginius.* Go; thou shouldst lead the helpless women hither:
Mingle thy warriors with the common people;
It would be best that Appius, when he comes,
Should find me here alone. I will address

To him ambiguous words; meanwhile, the place
Most opportune, whence we may fall on Appius,
I will espy. I here await thy coming:
When thou returnest, do not wear a look
Imprudently audacious: check thy fury
For a short time; the hour approaches fast,
When, on this spot, it all may spend itself.

## SCENE II.

VIRGINIUS.

*Virginius.* O Rome! . . . O daughter!—Now I fear from nothing,
Save from Icilius' too intemp'rate valor.

## SCENE III.

APPIUS, VIRGINIUS.

*Ap.* Hast thou at last resolved?
*Virginius.* A long time since.
*Ap.* As should a father?
*Virginius.* As a Roman father.
*Ap.* Thou with Icilius ev'ry tie hast broken?
*Virginius.* Three potent ties bind me to him.
*Ap.* They are?
*Virginius.* The ties of blood, of friendship, and of virtue.
*Ap.* Perfidious as thou art! these boasted ties
Blood shall eternalize.
*Virginius.* I am most willing
That they with blood should be eternalized.—
I know that opposition is in vain:
Yet I prepare myself to suffer death,
Sooner than loose my daughter from my grasp;
I cannot more than this: the gods, I hope,
Will one day signally avenge my cause.
*Ap.* See'st thou the gods of Appius? These arm'd troops
With which I am surrounded. Well I know,
That by avow'd and by clandestine means
Ye do prepare to cope with me in arms:
On my side are the laws; on yours is licence:
I should reap glory even from defeat;

To you success would only bring disgrace.—
But ye will conquer: the fierce multitude
Returns in crowds already to the forum:
Trust to that multitude; whate'er it wills,
It always has the pow'r to execute.
Behold Virginia weeping; in her train
Her shrieking mother comes with hair dishevell'd,
And her clothes rent. What noisy turbulence!
With what a howling do the skies resound!
Who knows what number of arm'd partisans
Icilius to the forum with him brings!

## Scene IV.

NUMITORIA, VIRGINIA, APPIUS, VIRGINIUS, MARCUS, PEOPLE, LICTORS.

*Nu.* O treachery!
*People.* O inauspicious day!
*Virginia.* At least thou yet art living, O my father!
Alas, thou knowest not the truth . . . Icilius! . . .
*Virginius.* What has become of him? I see him not.
*Nu.* Dead is Icilius.
*Virginius.* What is this I hear?
O Heav'ns!
*Ap.* Who was so bold, as thus to wreak
Vengeance upon him in defence of Rome,
Without awaiting that he were condemn'd
By the just rigor of the laws?
*Nu.* Thou vile one!
And dar'st thou thus dissemble? To the forum
With us he came, depending on his valor,
When, lo! his own adherents came to him
With menacing deportment, face to face;
Aruns, and Faustus, and Cæsonius too,
And others with them arm'd; first Aruns cried:
"Thou art a traitor, then?" . . . And, in an instant,
Inflamed with passion, and with frantic howlings,
They drew their swords, and leapt together on him.
Icilius, always ready for defence,
E'en ere a word he utter'd, in a circle
Brandish'd his flaming sword: first Aruns fell;

Then all who had the courage to attack him.—
Then to the startled multitude from far
The most intimidated cried: "Ah, Romans,
"Icilius is a traitor: he would be
"In Rome a king." Scarce had that name been heard,
Ere all around on ev'ry side assail'd him,
And instantaneous was his death.
*Virginius.* Alas!
What an unworthy death for such a hero!
*Nu.* The swords of others smote him not; he turn'd
His own against himself: and dying, cried:
"I will not be a king; nor be a slave.
"Learn to die free, my spouse, from my example . . ."
*Virginia.* Alas! I heard thy dying words distinctly . . .
Belovèd spouse; . . . and I will follow thee . . .
Three times I saw the sword within thy breast
Plunged by thy own right hand; . . . to seize that sword
I stretch'd my firm hand, but . . . in vain . . .
*Nu.* The crowd
Has forced us onward from the fearful sight,
And here impell'd us.
*Virginius.* Thus Icilius falls,
O Romans . . . Appius reigns already . . .
*Ap.* Romans,
Icilius, as his death's sole ministers,
Had his own hand, and his own partisans.
Conscious of his misdeeds, he would by death
Somewhat atone for his opprobrious life:
He died a Roman; though he lived not one.—
I ne'er myself should have chastised the traitor;
He was too dear to you. But time at last
Brings ev'ry thing to light, and has removed
The fatal bandage from the people's eyes.
The multitude had call'd it tyranny,
If I had sentenced him to punishment;
And yet so worthy did he seem of death,
E'en to his own adherents.
*Virginius.* Appius, no;
No man dost thou deceive: all here behold
The author of this dreadful treachery.
Icilius slain, thou more than half hast gain'd

Thy impious cause. Now with impunity,
Appius, proceed, and let us hear the sentence.—
But, what do I demand? Who reads it not
In ev'ry face of this arm'd multitude? . . .
And in the silence of affrighted Rome?
*Ap.* —What now, ye traitors? Since ye have in vain
Attempted treason, if ye are betray'd
By your own creatures, wherefore blame ye me?
Where is the wonder, if to one so faithless
They were themselves unfaithful?—Sons of Rome,
I now address myself to you alone.
Ye see around you scatter'd armèd troops,
'Tis true, but solely for the good of Rome.
To your unanimous and upright wishes
Who dares oppose himself? Assuredly
Not I: but I have will'd it thus to be,
That I might so defend against a few,
A factious few, the majesty of Rome,
Centred in me by universal suffrage.—
P'rhaps in Icilius the last traitor died?—
Lictors, surround Virginius with your axes,
Till sentence be pronounced. For evil deeds
He comes with evil thoughts: if he hath reasons
To urge in his defence, let him produce them;
But thwart him, if he seeks redress by force.
*Nu.* Alas!
*Virginia.* Unhappy I! My father also? . . .
*Virginius.* 'Tis true I am a traitor; for I am
Virginia's father: as Icilius was,
As her betroth'd; yes, all are traitors, all
That do refuse to prostitute their wives
And daughters to his lust. Are ye not yet
Fully convinced of his atrocity?—
Romans, although ye see me innocent,
Yet with Icilius, and with thousand others,
Let me be dragg'd to death: but, ah, defend
That virtuous maiden; to a lot she's destined
Worse, worse, a thousand times than any death.
Not for myself do I thus supplicate;
For her I tremble; and for her I weep.
*Nu.* And do not all of you with us shed tears?

O fathers, learn, from our example learn,
What ye have to expect . . . O cruel ones! . . .
Are all, then, silent? . . .—Mothers, hear me then:
O ye alone who truly love the offspring
Sprung from your blood, and nourish'd in your womb:
Here to have children is too great a crime;
Mothers, if ye their honor, or your own,
Regard, O plunge, soon as they see the light,
The fatal weapon in their infant breasts.

*Ap.* Listen, ye mothers, to a mother's love!
Who sees not now that she is not the mother,
And that the father is by her deceived?—
Of me ye ask'd the presence of Virginius,
And 'twas most just, that he should witness be
Of such a trial: see him, here he is:
But can his presence interdict that I
Boldly pronounce an equitable sentence?—
The witnesses of Marcus I've examined,
And lastly Marcus; they agree. His right,
I swear it to the people, is establish'd:
The specious imposition of the mother
Is more than proved by evidence like this;
Whence by a subtle counterchange she seeks
To gain by tumults, a cause lost by truth.—
I grieve to be obliged to undeceive
The still deluded sire; and yet I ought.—
Marcus, Virginia's thine; to thine own slave
Thy just pretension cannot be refused.

*Nu.* Was e'er such sentence pass'd? Will no one hear me?

*Virginia.* Mother, thou see'st my father, how, alas!
With axes he's encompass'd: so he cannot
Exert himself for me; scarce can he speak,
And speaks in vain. Give me the sword; thou hast it;
By thee 'twas promised to me: I have lost
Icilius; shall I lose my honor also?

*Virginius.* O impious herd of despicable slaves,
Are ye by fear thus palsied? Ye forget,
So that ye may prolong a wretched life,
Your honor, and your children, and your country?
I hear a scarce distinguishable murmur;

But no one moves. Ah vile, ah doubly vile!
May each of you have such a lot as mine;
If possible, a worse: of property,
Of honor, children, wives, and liberty,
Of arms, and lastly robb'd of intellect,
Ah may the tyrant, after lengthen'd torments,
Take from you, what is scarcely now your own,
Your infamous and prostituted lives,
Which ye would purchase at so vile a price.
*Ap.* 'Tis true, Rome murmurs, but at thee alone.
Be silent now.—This instant to her master,
Lictors, conduct the slave; and be not baffled
By the seditious grief of the feign'd mother:
Tear from her arms her surreptitious daughter.
*Nu.* Ye first shall slay me.
*Virginia.* Mother!
*People.* Luckless day!
*Virginius.* . . . Appius, delay, and hear me for a moment:
Delay, and hear me, I beseech thee.—I
Brought up this virgin as my only child:
More than myself I hitherto have loved her:
If my wife utters falsehoods, of the fraud
I'm ignorant . . .
*Nu.* Alas! What do I hear?
Canst thou consent thus to degrade thy wife? . . .
Can this Virginius be?
*Virginia.* Art thou, my father,
At such a moment changed so utterly?
Dost thou, alas, no longer deem me thine?
*Virginius.* Whatever I may deem thee, I do love thee,
As should the tend'rest father love his daughter.—
Ah, Appius, suffer thou, that, yet once more,
Ere I for ever lose her, I may clasp her
To what I deem'd to be a father's bosom.
My pride is humbled, it is broken, nothing:
In thee do I adore the majesty,
The institutions, and the gods of Rome.—
But, can I in a day, nay, in an instant,
Of that paternal love divest myself,
Which for so many happy years has been
The best part of my life? . . .

*Ap.* May Heav'n forbid
That I should e'er to such a pitch be cruel,
As to ascribe to guilt a love so just.
Once more thyself, thou speakest as thou ought'st:
And, as I ought, I answer thee. For him,
Lictors, at once make way.
*Virginius.* Ah come, O daughter,
To my paternal breast; with such a name,
'Tis sweet to me yet once more to accost thee, . . .
Once more.—The last pledge of paternal love
I give thee—death and freedom.
*Virginia.* O . . . true . . . father! . . .
*Nu.* O Heav'ns! my daughter . . .
*Ap.* What hast thou now done? . . .
Lictors, ah! quick . . .
*Virginius.* To the infernal gods
Do I devote thy head with this pure blood.
*People.* O sight atrocious! Appius is a tyrant . . .
*Virginius.* Romans, are ye now stirr'd to rage? 'tis late:
'Twill not restore life to the innocent.
*People.* The tyrant Appius dies.
*Ap.* The parricide
Shall die, and ev'ry rebel.
*Virginius.* Ere we die,
Heroes, there yet is time for vengeance.[1]
*Ap.* Time[2]
Remains to punish thee before I die.
*Virginius.* The tyrant Appius dies.[3]
*People.* Yes, Appius dies.[4]

[1] Virginius and the people are about to assault the lictors and the satellites of Appius.
[2] Appius and his followers advance to repel the people and Virginius.
[3] The curtain falls.
[4] A great tumult, and the clang of arms, are heard.

V.

# AGAMEMNON.

## THE ARGUMENT.

THE four personages in this tragedy are Agamemnon, king of Argos, the famous conqueror of Troy; Clytemnestra, his wife (daughter of Jupiter and Leda); Electra, his daughter; and Ægisthus, the son of Thyestes, who has won the affections of Clytemnestra, and who afterwards becomes king of Argos. The play opens just as Agamemnon is on the point of arriving in his country, after the conclusion of the siege of Troy; and the very first scene shows the intention of Ægisthus to avenge on the house of Agamemnon the death of Thyestes. The conversation that ensues between him and Clytemnestra makes evident, not only her love for him, which he, in heart, but little returns, but her detestation of her own husband, on account of his having sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia. On his departure, Electra enters, and avows her deep affection for her father, and implores her mother to abandon her betrayer Ægisthus; to banish him from Argos, and welcome back Agamemnon. Presently the vessels of the latter enter the port; he lands and approaches the palace; whereupon Ægisthus proposes to fly, but Clytemnestra vows that if he does, she will accompany him. He swears, in return, not to depart till the following day. When Electra appears, and announces the welcome given to Agamemnon by his people, Clytemnestra reminds him in her presence of the oath; and as soon as he is left alone, he rejoices at the approaching fulfilment of his vengeance on the whole family of Atreus.

Agamemnon himself now appears upon the scene, surrounded by his rejoicing people, but in the midst of his happiness cannot refrain from noticing the coldness of the reception given him by Clytemnestra, of the cause of which he is entirely unaware; nor do the answers made by Electra serve to reassure him. The presence of Ægisthus in Argos, of which he had not before heard, also surprises him. On seeing the latter, who implores his protection, he speaks kindly to him, promises his influence towards his reinstatement in his hereditary rights, but orders him to quit Argos forthwith.

Another interview takes place between Ægisthus and his victim, who is inextricably involved in his toils. He rejects her proposal that they should fly together; and with consummate skill, and by announcing that Agamemnon has brought Cassandra home with him to be her rival, he works her up to a determination to slay her husband, to which she binds herself by oath. Electra appears, forebodes an approaching catastrophe, and urges Agamemnon to banish Ægisthus without delay. At a final interview between the king and his guilty wife, he assures her that her jealousy of Cassandra is unfounded.

The final catastrophe rapidly approaches; Clytemnestra enters with a dagger to slay her husband in his sleep, but repents and throws it away. The return of Ægisthus, however, once more suffices to confirm her in her resolve, and the horrid deed is completed by her, whilst Ægisthus, rejoicing in the success of his machinations, proclaims himself as king of Argos, and hastens away to slay Orestes, the youthful son of Agamemnon and his rightful heir, whom however Electra succeeds in rescuing.

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This play (originally called *The Death of Agamemnon*) is reviewed at great length by Sismondi, and highly praised by him. It is the first of the Second Series of Tragedies published by Alfieri, and which appeared at the end of 1783. Schlegel on the other hand thinks (though it will scarcely be the general opinion) that this and the succeeding tragedy of *Orestes*, borrowed by him from the Greek,

" lose in his hands all their heroic magnificence, and assume a modern, not to say vulgar, air."

Alfieri, who is never slow to criticize his own productions, considers that although each of the four characters, taken by itself, is defective, yet that the Tragedy as a whole is effective and attractive. He thinks that this is owing to its simplicity and rapid action, which keeps the mind in suspense and curiosity, and leaves it no time to dwell on the defects. He says that what is good in the play is derived from the author, and what is bad in it from itself. (*Parere &c.*)

It is almost needless to add that this play is based on the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus.

# AGAMEMNON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| AGAMEMNON. | ÆGISTHUS. |
| CLYTEMNESTRA. | *People.* |
| ELECTRA. | *Soldiers.* |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Argos.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* O bloody, angry, discontented shade
Of unavenged Thyestes, why pursue me?
Leave me, O father; . . . go; depart from hence,
Once more return thou to the Stygian shores.
All, all thy furies fill my breast; thy blood,
Too surely, runs through all my veins. I know
That I'm the offspring of flagitious incest,
To guilt predoom'd: nor is it requisite,
To bring this to my mind, that I should see thee.
That now Atrides comes to Argos back,
A haughty conqueror from Troy, I know.
Within his palace I expect him here:
Let him return; his triumph will be short,
I swear to thee. My steps shall vengeance guide:
Vengeance resounds within my heart; the time
Approaches for it; thou shalt have it: here
More than one victim thou shalt have, Thyestes;
The blood of Atreus thou shalt drink in streams.

But I must have recourse to art before
I use the sword: unaided, and alone,
Against a mighty king I stand: can I,
If in my breast my fury and my hate
I do not hide, obtain the victory?

## Scene II.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Cly.* Ægisthus, shall I ever find thee thus
A prey to gloomy thoughts in solitude?
From me thou hidest thy corroding cares,
From me? . . . Must I then see thee fly from her
Who breathes alone for thee?
*Ægis.* I do confess
I am too much an alien in this palace.
'Tis true, thou trustest to me; and my foot
Within these thresholds I had never planted,
Hadst thou not fill'd the throne: I hither came,
Thou knowest, for thy sake; and here remain
For thee. But ah, the day, the fatal day,
Already is approaching, on the which,
Thou . . . e'en thyself . . . wilt banish me from hence.
*Cly.* What saidst thou? I? and dost thou think it? no!—
But little, nothing, do my oaths avail;
Thou for thyself shalt witness, if I cherish,
Within my loving bosom, any thought
Except of thee alone.
*Ægis.* And though I were
Thy heart's sole object, yet, if I esteem
Thy honor more important than my life,
I should destroy, and will destroy myself,
Ere I disturb thy peace; or be the means
To dim thy fame, or rob thee but in part
Of Agamemnon's love. From hence to go
A fugitive, neglected, and obscure,
This is the destiny to which I am doom'd,
The hapless offspring of accursed Thyestes.
I am accounted of a wicked father,
Though innocent, the son more wicked still:
I need wealth, pow'r, and arrogance of carriage,

To cancel the misfortune of my birth,
And the opprobrium of my father's name.
Not thus Atrides: he returns renown'd,
The conqueror of Troy; and can I hope
That he will e'er endure the sight in Argos,
Of the detested offspring of Thyestes,
His most implacable and mortal foe?

*Cly.* If he returns, his new and glorious trophies
Will, from his mind, obliterate all thought
Of animosities in years long past:
A conquering king will banish from his breast
Hatred tow'rds one whom he no longer fears.

*Ægis.* . . . 'Tis true, that, on my own account, I cannot
By any one be fear'd; alone, an exile,
Oppress'd with wretchedness, bereft of power,
Atrides will not condescend to hate me;
But p'rhaps he may despise me: and wouldst thou
That I stay'd here exposed to such an outrage?
Dost thou exhort me to do this, and love me?

*Cly.* Thou lovest me, and yet canst entertain
The cruel thought of leaving me for ever?

*Ægis.* 'Tis useless now, O queen, to flatter thee.
Necessity inspires the fatal thought.
Provided that thy lord could but forget
My father's injuries, canst thou expect
That he would e'er dissemble, or not know
The outrage that we practise on his love?
If I stay'd here, I ought to shun thy presence;
And should drag on a melancholy life,
Worse than the worst of deaths. If now and then
I came into thy sight, one sigh alone,
One gesture, might betray me: what would be
The consequence? 'Tis too, too true! The least,
Slightest suspicion in a proud king's heart
Makes those who are its objects culpable
Of ev'ry crime. I think not of myself;
Nought for myself I fear; I ought indeed
To give thee of true love this fearful proof,
And with thy honor also save thy life.

*Cly.* Perchance, who knows? more than thou dost suspect.
The peril may be distant, or be past:

Many revolving moons have now return'd
Since fell the walls of Troy; yet still Atrides
Tarries, and still arrives not. Thou know'st well,
It is reported that the Grecian fleet,
Driven by angry winds, at length was scatter'd.
Perchance the day is come that brings to me
A full revenge at last, though long delay'd,
For the most cruel murder of my daughter.

*Ægis.* And if this were the day; ah, wouldst thou deign,
Illustrious widow of the king of kings,
To cast a look on me, the branch obscure
Of a detested blood? on me, the sport
Of inauspicious fate? on me, deprived
Of glory, wealth, arms, subjects, and of friends? . . .

*Cly.* And add, of crimes.—'Tis true thou graspest not
The sceptre of Atrides; but the dagger,
Trickling and reeking with my daughter's blood,
I see not in thy hands. Ere from my breast
He dared to wrest my daughter, and to drag her
A bleeding victim to the impious altar,
I call the gods to witness, that my heart
Received Atrides as its only lord.
But the remembrance of that fatal day,
That awful moment, with eternal grief,
And unimaginable rage, consumes me.
To the vain dreams of a fallacious augur,
And the ambition of a cruel father,
I saw my daughter immolated, torn
By stealth from me, under the false pretext
Of an auspicious marriage. From that day,
Down to this very time, I feel myself
Shudder with horror at the name alone
Of such a father.—I have not since seen him;
And if to-day, at length, betray'd by fortune . . .

*Ægis.* Fortune will never turn her back on him,
However much he weary her. 'Twas she
That to the shores of Xanthus led Atrides
Conductor of the Greeks; 'twas she that made him,
Rather than virtue, overcome, when there,
The' implacable resentment of Achilles,

And Hector's valor: lastly, we shall see her
Once more enthrone him in expectant Argos,
Laden with trophies, arrogant from conquest.
A long time, no, shall not elapse ere thou
Shalt have Atrides by thy side; and he
Will well know how thy anger to extinguish:
Pledges are living of your former love,
Electra and Orestes; pledges still
Of interchangeable and lasting peace:
E'en as the clouds disperse before the sun,
At his return the ill-starr'd love will fly,
Which now for me thou foster'st in thy breast.

*Cly.* . . . Electra's dear to me, Orestes needful, . . .
But still the tones of thy expiring voice,
Iphigenia, echo in my heart:
I hear thee cry, in supplicating accents:
O mother! canst thou love my murderer?
No, no; I love him not.—Ægisthus, thou
Hadst been a diff'rent father to my children.

*Ægis.* Ah, could I one day clasp them in my arms!
But that I ne'er must hope.—In the dread future
I've nothing to expect but grief and shame,
Calamity and ruin. Yet my fate,
Whatever it may be, I here expect,
If 'tis thy will. Yes, here will I remain,
Since mine the danger is; if it were thine,
I should know how alone to fall the victim
Of an unhappy love.

*Cly.* Ere that hour comes,
I will inseparably join our fates.
Thy frank and modest language hath inflamed
My bosom more than ever: more and more
I see thou'rt worthy of a better fate.—
But see, Electra comes; leave me with her:
I love her; and would fain attempt, at least,
To mould her inclinations in thy favor.

## Scene III.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Elec.* Mother, and must it be, that we're condemn'd
By unpropitious fate to tremble ever?
That thou, in vain, shouldst languish for thy husband,
I for my father? If day after day
Perpetual new impediments arise
To keep from Argos her victorious monarch,
What profits it that we have long since heard
That Troy's proud tow'rs lie levell'd with the dust?

*Cly.* Is the report well founded, then, that told us
The Grecian fleet was shipwreck'd or dispersed?

*Elec.* Diff'rent reports are prevalent in Argos:
Some say, that even to the Bosphorus,
By turbid and impetuous southern winds,
Our fleet was forced: while others swear they saw
Their white sails glimm'ring on this very coast:
Too many, also, are there who affirm
That 'gainst a rock the royal prow was dash'd,
And that they all who sail'd in her were drown'd,
Together with the king. Unhappy we! . . .
Mother, to whom must we now credence yield?
How rid ourselves of doubt? How be exempt
From fear's disquietude?

*Cly.* The rebel winds,
That would not be appeased, except with blood,
At his departure, now, at his return,
Perchance demand a human sacrifice.—
My children, what a solace to my heart
Is it that ye are safe, and by my side!
At least, as I did ten years since, I need not
Now tremble for your sakes.

*Elec.* What do I hear?
And doth the memory of that sacrifice
Still press upon thy heart? tremendous, fatal,
But indispensable it was. If Heaven
One of thy daughters as a sacrifice
To-day required; exultingly to-day
Would I approach the sacred altar; I:
To save for thee thy consort, for the Greeks
Their chief, for Argos all its regal splendor.

*Cly.* I know how dear to thee thy father is:
Ah, didst thou equally thy mother love!
*Elec.* Alike I love you: but my father is
In pressing danger; . . . yet when thou dost hear
His hard vicissitudes, not only I
Do never see thee weep, but scarce, alas!
I see thy aspect change. Ah, didst thou love him,
Mother, as much as I! . . .
*Cly.* Too well I know him.
*Elec.* O Heav'ns! what say'st thou? thus thou didst not speak
Of him some months ago. Till there had pass'd
Almost a lustre from the time when first
The Grecians sail'd from hence, myself I heard thee
Each day sigh more and more for his return.
To us thou talkedst of his undertakings;
In these thou livedst; foster'dst us with these:
Speaking of him, I saw thy cheeks bedew'd
With tears of genuine sorrow . . . Thou hast not
Seen him since then; he is what then he was:
But thou art changed too much; ah! is there, then,
Any new cause, that thus may render him
So diff'rent from his former self, to thee?
*Cly.* What dost thou mean? new cause? . . . my heart, unchanged,
Was always thus an alien from his love . . .
Ah! thou know'st not . . . what shall I say? . . . O daughter,
If I reveal'd to thee the inmost thoughts
Of this sad heart . . .
*Elec.* O that I knew them not!
*Cly.* Alas! what do I hear? My secret, then,
Has she discover'd? . . .
*Elec.* O that I, at least,
And only I, thy secret had discover'd!
But know'st thou not, that, in external semblance,
Those who most rev'rently surround the great,
Malignantly, intensely, greedily,
Their ev'ry motion watch? Thou, and thou only,
Now hearest not the murmur of the people;
Thinking that that from ev'ry man is hidden,
Which thou but ill concealest, which alone
To thee none dare impart.—Love blinds thee.

*Cly.* Love?
Alas! who hath betray'd me thus?...
*Elec.* Thyself;
And long has it been so. From thy own lips
It was not likely that I e'er should hear
Of such a flame: to speak of it to me
Would have cost thee too much. Belovèd mother,
What art thou doing? I do not believe
That a flagitious passion fires thy breast:
Involuntary fondness, sprung from pity,
Which youth, especially when 'tis unhappy,
Is apt to cause; these, mother, are the baits
By which, without thyself suspecting it,
Thou hast been caught. Thou hast not, hitherto,
Each secret impulse carefully examined:
A bosom conscious of its rectitude,
Hardly admits suspicion of itself;
And here, perchance, there is no ground for it:
Perchance thy fame thou yet hast scarcely sullied,
Much less thy virtue: and there still is time
To make atonement in each passing gesture.
Ah, by the sacred shade, so dear to thee,
Of thy slain daughter; by that love itself,
Which thou hast ever shown and felt for me,
That love, of which to-day I'm not unworthy;
How can I more persuasively adjure thee?
By thy son's life, Orestes' life: O mother,
Pause on the brink of the dread precipice.
Banish Ægisthus far: stop evil tongues
By thy deportment: with thy children weep
The hardships of Atrides: and frequent
With them the sacred temples of the gods,
To seek his swift return.
*Cly.* Ægisthus banish?
*Elec.* Wilt thou not do it?... but thy lord, my father,
Merits not thus to be by thee betray'd;
Nor will he suffer it.
*Cly.* But; grant... that he...
No longer lives?...
*Elec.* Thou mak'st my blood run cold.
*Cly.* What do I say?... Alas!... What do I wish?...
Electra, weep the error of thy mother,

Weep, that that error still remains unchanged.
The lengthen'd absence of a cruel husband, . . .
The merit of Ægisthus, . . . the decrees
Of an o'erruling destiny . . .
*Elec.* O Heavens!
What sayest thou? The merit of Ægisthus?
Ah! thou know'st not the vices of his heart:
Springing from such a blood, it cannot be
That of one genuine virtue he's possess'd.
An exile, vile, the fruit of horrid incest;
Such a successor dost thou in thy thoughts
Plan for the king of kings?
*Cly.* And who am I?
Am I not Leda's daughter, Helen's sister?
A blood impure as theirs runs in my veins.
The will of angry gods, an unknown force,
Are dragging me along, despite myself . . .
*Elec.* Helen? and dost thou yet account her sister?
Ah, if thou wilt, try to resemble Helen:
But do not be more culpable than she.
She had no son, though she betray'd her husband:
She fled; but did not from her own descendants
The sceptre snatch. And to Ægisthus' hands
Wouldst thou not only yield thyself, but yield
Thy sceptre, and thy children too?
*Cly.* If fate,
O daughter, wills that I should be bereft
Of Agamemnon, do not think that I
Would from Orestes seize his father's throne.
To me a husband, but not thence a king,
Would be Ægisthus; rather he would be
A father, a protector, to Orestes . . .
*Elec.* Rather would he be an atrocious tyrant;
Of thy defenceless son the foe; and (ah,
I shudder as I think of it!) perchance
The murderer. O mother! wouldst thou trust
Thy son to one who pants to seize his throne?
Trust Atreus' grandchild to Thyestes' son? . . .
But I transgress with thee in vain the bounds
Of filial duty. Both of us indulge
The hope that still the great Atrides lives;

My heart assures me of it. His appearance
Will of itself suffice to quench in thee
Each less illustrious flame: and I, as ought
A duteous daughter, swear to thee, for ever
To hide the' important secret in my breast.
*Cly.* Wretch that I am! In all thy words I hear
The voice of truth: but in my darken'd breast
The flash of reason shines so transiently,
Leaving no track behind it, that I tremble.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* Of this erewhile I warn'd thee: now, behold
The time for hope is gone, and come for fear.
Fortune, the gods, and favorable winds
Bring, with full sail, Atrides into port.
I who, a short time since, might have withdrawn
From Argos, and have left thy fame unspotted,
Now must avoid the presence of the king;
Of his imperial and despotic will
Leave thee the victim: and myself shrink back
I know not whither, banish'd from thy sight,
And die of grief.—Behold, to what I am,
By thy excessive hopes, reduced at last.
*Cly.* Why shouldst thou fly? Of what fault art thou guilty?
Why shouldst thou fear? 'Tis I that am the culprit;
But in my heart alone; nor can Atrides
Discern what passes there.
*Ægis.* True love, like ours,
How can it e'er be hid? Alas! already
'Tis but too manifest. How, then, hop'st thou
The king should never know it?
*Cly.* Who would dare
To tell it to the king, before he knew
Whether he would be punish'd or rewarded

For the disgraceful news? Thou knowest not
The endless artifices of a court.
Invented crimes are often there alleged;
But real ones, and those especially,
Which may offend his pride, are oftentimes
Not to a king divulged.—Although from fear
I am not quite exempt, yet not for this
Is hope entirely banish'd from my breast,
I only ask of thee, Ægisthus, now,
Do not deny it me: a single day.
The danger I have hitherto conceived
Distant and doubtful; hence I find myself
With an appropriate remedy unfurnish'd.
Leave me to shape expedients to the time.
I'll scrutinize the monarch's looks and gestures.
Thou might'st, perchance, some time remain in Argos
Unknown to any one . . .

*Ægis.* Thyestes' son,
Unknown in Argos?

*Cly.* For a day at least
I hope he may; and, to mature my projects,
A day will be sufficient. On my faith
Do thou meanwhile implicitly depend:
Know thou, that, sooner than abandon thee,
I am resolved to tread in Helen's footsteps . . .

*Ægis.* Know, that I rather would a thousand times
Perish, than e'er contaminate thy name.
Of mine I do not speak; by unjust fate
That to eternal infamy is doom'd.
Ah, could I be assured, that I should lose
Nothing but life, if I remain'd in Argos!
Son of Thyestes, in Atrides' court
I must expect contempt and insolence.
And what would be the consequence, if he
Discover'd afterwards that I adored thee?
Inevitably then I should obtain
That death so much desired; how infamous,
Who knows? To witness me, in horrid torments,
Thou wouldst then be compell'd; at the same time,
By that vain-glorious insolent, to hear
Thyself most bitterly reviled; if that

Indeed contented him.—'Tis love alone
That thus instructs me to be apprehensive;
For thee I tremble. Thou shouldst quite forget me;
Thou yet hast time; I am obscure by birth,
Leave me to perish in obscurity:
Yes, to my fate, whate'er that fate may be,
Abandon me: I to myself from thee
Prescribe eternal exile. For thy spouse
Resume thy former fondness: if not love,
Yet Heav'n and fortune make him worthier of thee.
*Cly.* Heav'n, reason, fortune, all, and all in vain,
Oppose my love. Grant this day to my prayers,
Or by my frantic words I shall defeat
All thy contrivances to guard my honor.
With a delib'rate recklessness I rush
To death, and e'en to infamy: I rush,
Defying all restraint, myself to pierce,
In tones of agony, Atrides' ears
With our unholy flame, and by one stroke
Thee and myself to ruin. 'Tis in vain
To wish thy destiny from mine dissever'd:
Fly, and I likewise fly; die, I too perish.
*Ægis.* Unfortunate Ægisthus!
*Cly.* Answer now:
Canst thou deny a day to so much love?
*Ægis.* And canst thou ask it? What ought I to do?
*Cly.* Swear that thou wilt not leave the walls of Argos
Before to-morrow's dawn.
*Ægis.* Dost thou to this
Compel me?—with an oath I promise it.

## Scene II.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS.

*Elec.* The day is calm; the passion of the winds
And of the roaring billows is no more.
Our hope is now matured to certainty:
And ev'ry apprehension changed to joy.
The wish'd-for port to gain, the Argive prows
Advance; and at a distance one beholds
Their sail-yards tow'r, dense as a moving wood.

Mother, thy spouse is safe; my father lives.
I learn, that first he leap'd upon the strand;
And, with swift step, tow'rds Argos he advances.
Already he is almost at the gates.
O mother, dost thou still stand here?
*Cly.* Remember
Thy oath, Ægisthus.
*Elec.* Will Ægisthus, too,
Go forth with us to meet the king of kings?
*Cly.* 'Tis an unworthy triumph thus, O daughter,
With bitter words to wound the' unfortunate . . .
*Ægis.* P'rhaps to Electra's ears, Ægisthus' name
Is too offensive: with Ægisthus' heart
She yet is unacquainted.
*Elec.* With that heart
Better am I acquainted than thou thinkest:
Were it as well known to my blinded mother!
*Cly.* By the fierce hatred of thy ancestors,
O daughter, thou art blinded: of Ægisthus,
Save that he is the offspring of Thyestes,
Thou knowest nothing. Wherefore, then, disdain
To hear how pious, humble, and discreet,
He is, how worthy of a birth less guilty?
Conscious of that disgrace, erewhile he wish'd
To fly from Argos, and withdraw himself
From prosp'rous Agamemnon's haughty presence.
*Elec.* Why does he not go now? what keeps him here?
*Ægis.* Be calm: I stay but for a little while;
The sight of one who never hated thee,
But whom so much thou hatest, by to-morrow
Shall be for ever from thine eyes removed.
I swore it to the queen a short time since,
And shall make good my words.
*Cly.* What a hard heart
Dost thou possess! Now see; to the fierce rancor
Which all thy accents breathe, he nought opposes
But patience and humility . . .
*Elec.* I came not
His rare perfections to investigate.
My duty led me hither to acquaint thee
With Agamemnon's coming; and to tell thee

That all the Argives, of all ranks, all ages,
With joyful plaudits, festively, in crowds,
With emulous haste, rush to escort him hither.
Ere now I should have rush'd into the arms
Of my long-wish'd-for father; but could I,
A daughter only, thus anticipate
A mother's footsteps? Thus the first usurp
The fond embraces to a consort due?
Why dost thou now delay? Ah let us go,
'Twould be a very crime to tarry longer.

*Cly.* Electra, thou dost know, and know too well,
The mournful state of my afflicted heart;
Yet thou exultest to transfix that heart
With these repeated blows.

*Elec.* . The gods can witness
How much I love thee, mother; how my breast
Bleeds with compassion for thee: love impels,
And pity likewise, to whate'er I do:
Wouldst thou be found thus at Ægisthus' side,
When first the king accosts thee? Thou disclosest,
By longer waiting, what thou wouldst conceal:
Let us depart.

*Ægis.* Ah! lady, I beseech thee,
Go; and persist not in thy own destruction.

*Cly.* I could not tremble as I tremble now,
If to inevitable death I went.
O dreadful meeting! moment of despair!
Whence can I summon such a fund of courage,
That 'twill not at his presence all forsake me?
He is my lord: and though I have not wrong'd him,
Except in thought, I cannot, cannot see him,
Without, at the first glance, betraying all.
I cannot, and I will not, feign affection . . .
O day to me of woe unutterable!

*Elec.* Rather to us a day of consolation!
I feel that I shall now regain my mother.
Feel'st thou remorse? no longer art thou guilty.

*Ægis.* Wert thou e'er guilty? Thou hadst cause to think
Thy husband dead; and, mistress of thy actions,
Didst think to give to me thy bridal hand.

Who can ascribe a thought like this to guilt?
He knows it not, except thou tell him of it.
Thou art not guilty; nor, when in his presence,
Hast cause to tremble. Thou wilt soon discover,
That his invulnerable breast retains,
For thy slain daughter, no compunctious pangs.
From his example learn to be secure.

*Elec.* Dar'st thou with thy death-bearing tongue asperse
The name of great Atrides? Let us go!
Ah, mother, let this be the last advice
That thou wilt hear from him.

*Cly.* Thy oath, Ægisthus;
Remember; thou hast sworn.

*Ægis.* One day remains.

*Cly.* O Heav'ns! one day? . . .

*Elec.* Too long for one that's impious.

## Scene III.

ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* Hate me, Electra, hate me; by Ægisthus
More fervently and fatally thou'rt hated:
And thou wilt find that my tremendous hate
In imprecations does not spend itself;
Ægisthus curses whom he hates, by death.—
At last, in all thy branches, thou art fallen
Within my pow'r, abominable race!
With what regretful bitterness I thought
The angry waves had feasted on Atrides!
Had it been so, O how had I been robb'd
By greedy billows of a mighty vengeance!
'Tis true, that, by their death, Atrides' children,
For Atreus' execrable deadly feast
Would have atonement made: Thyestes, thus
I should in part thy bloody thirst appease:
Thy vengeful and retributory oath
In part I should have ratified . . . What say I?
Shall this revival of their sire redeem
From death his offspring?—Lo! the train here comes
Of the victorious king. Hence, hence, and yield
To the tumultuous and unthinking joy

Of the glad people: glad they know not why.
Your triumph shall be transient.—I am here
A stranger to all feasts but those of blood.

## Scene IV.

PEOPLE, AGAMEMNON, ELECTRA, CLYTEMNESTRA, SOLDIERS.

*Aga.* At last I see the wish'd-for walls of Argos
Once more: the ground I tread is the loved spot
Where once I wander'd with my infant feet:
All that I see around me are my friends:
My wife, my daughter, and my faithful people,
And you, ye household gods, whom I at last
Return to worship. What have I to wish?
What does there now remain for me to hope?
How long and tedious do two lustres seem,
Spent in a foreign country, far from all
The heart holds dear! With what profound delight,
After the labors of a bloody war,
Shall I repose! O what asylum true
Of peace, to be at home!—But, ah, am I
The only one who tastes of rapture here?
My wife, my daughter, silently ye stand,
Fixing upon the ground unquietly
Your conscious eyes? O Heav'ns, do ye not feel
A joy that equals mine, in being thus
Restored to my embrace?

*Elec.* O, my dear father! . . .

*Cly.* My lord . . . to-day we've felt vicissitudes
Too rapid and too opposite . . . Now driven
From hope to grief, and now from grief driv'n back
To unexpected joy . . . Ill can the heart
Emotions bear so sudden and discordant.

*Elec.* For thee till now we trembled. Here report
Spread of thee various and tremendous tidings;
To which the turbulent and stormy winds,
Which have for many days the ocean vex'd,
Made us yield credence; to ourselves a source
Of deep anxiety. At last thou'rt safe;
At last from Troy a victor thou returnest,
So much desired, and for so many months

So much desired in vain. At last, O father,
Upon this hand, upon this hand of thine,
On which, before thou didst depart from hence,
I, but a child, infantine kisses printed,
I now more fervent adult kisses press.
O warlike hand, which made all Asia tremble,
Do not disdain a simple damsel's homage:
Ah no! I feel assured, that, to the heart
Of my most tender father, to behold
Once more, to clasp his well-belovèd daughter,
Matured in age, devoted to his will,
Will be a grateful spectacle, far more
Than vanquish'd kingdoms, and submissive monarchs.
*Aga.* Yes, daughter; dearer to me far than fame
Are the fond ties of blood: ah! could I be
As happy as a father and a husband,
As I am as a warrior and a king!
But I reproach not you; myself alone
And my hard destiny. Already Heaven
Has robb'd me of one daughter: to complete
My measure of parental happiness
At my return, she only now was wanting.
But Heav'n forbids it; and I must divert
From the sad subject my regretful thoughts.—
Electra, thou art left to me; art left
To thy unhappy and afflicted mother.
How, as a fond companion, by her side,
Her only solace in my tedious absence,
Her endless tears, her anxious restlessness,
And all her suff'rings, hast thou shared with her,
Thou tender daughter! O, how many days,
How many nights, in calling me to mind,
Have ye consumed together! . . . Likewise, I,
Amid the frequent fierce vicissitudes
Of military enterprise; 'mid blood,
'Mid glory, and 'mid death, for ever saw
Your image present, your anxieties,
Your tears, conjectures, and inquietudes.
Oft in my helmet have I sat and wept
In silence; but, except the father, none
Were conscious of these tears. But now the time

For grief is at an end: and Clytemnestra,
From her dejected look, and tearful eye,
Alone I do not recognize.
*Cly.* I sad? . . .
*Elec.* Joy, when it is excessive, overcomes
As much as grief. O father, give her time
To calm her scatter'd spirits. She would fain
Say more than I can say, and hence says less.
*Aga.* Nor has she spoken to me of Orestes . . .
*Cly.* Orestes? . . .
*Elec.* Ah! come to embrace him, father.
*Aga.* Heir of my throne, my only hope, Orestes,
Support and consolation of my life;
Till in these arms a thousand times I've clasp'd thee,
I will not to these weary limbs allow
A moment's rest. My consort, let us go;
Let's hasten to embrace him: that dear son,
Of whom, though thou speak'st not, thou art the mother;
Him, whom I left an infant at the breast,
Quitting him with reluctance . . . Has he grown?
What are his sports? resembleth he his father?
Hath he the seeds of future virtue in him?
Do his eyes sparkle with a noble ardor,
If he beholds a brandish'd sword, or hears
Of glorious exploits, or heroic deeds?
*Cly.* I cannot any longer check my tears . . .
*Elec.* Ah, father, come, and thou shalt see him: he
Expressly is thy image; since from hence
Thou wentest, never have I quitted him.
Age of simplicity! oft as he heard
His father named by us: "When, when," he cried,
"Shall I behold him?" Hearing afterwards
Of Troy, and arms, and foes, in thy defence,
With childish eagerness, he would aspire,
Equipp'd with arms, to brave thy enemies.
*Aga.* Ah! say no more: let us depart. Each instant
Seems death to me that I delay to see him.

## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

AGAMEMNON, ELECTRA.

*Aga.* Have I return'd to my own family?
Or have I only changed my enemies
By change of place? Electra, do thou calm
Thy father's horrid doubts. Within my palace
I find a new reception; to my consort
I am become a stranger; yet, methinks,
She might ere now composure have regain'd.
Each word of hers, each gesture, and each look,
Art, alienation, diffidence, constraint,
Successively announce. Am I become
To her so terrible, that, in her heart,
No other feelings I can now excite,
Than terror? Whither, then, have they all gone,
Those chaste yet warm embraces? whither flown
Those soft and artless accents? those dear proofs,
By thousands, and by thousands, of a love
Indubitable, which with such a pang
I left—where are they? which, with such a hope
So fond, so flatt'ring, and so dearly cherish'd,
I wish'd to see again; ah! tell me why,
Instead of finding them in more abundance,
They are all fled, no traces of them left?

*Elec.* My lord, my father, thou dost in thyself
Unite such attributes, that thou excitest
Rev'rence no less than love. Thy wife hath lived
A prey to sorrow for two lustres past:
It is not possible, in one brief day,
To shake off grief confirm'd to habitude.
Her silence . . .

*Aga.* How much less was I at first
Confounded by that silence, than I now
Am by her studied artificial phrases!
How seldom is a genuine tenderness
Wrapt in the pomp of words! There is a silence,
The child of love, more eloquent than speech,

Conveying meanings language cannot utter:
And there are gestures fraught with thought, and feeling,
The heart's involuntary messengers:
But neither is her silence nor her speech
Suggested by affection: that is certain.
What boots the glory now with which I'm laden?
The laurels, 'mid such dire vicissitudes,
With so much bloodshed gain'd; if I have lost
In gaining them—a blessing far more precious—
My peace of mind?
*Elec.* Ah, banish such a thought!
As far as it depends on me, as far
As on my mother it depends, shalt thou
Enjoy among us perfect peace.
*Aga.* Yet whence
Has she become so diff'rent to herself?
Tell me thyself: erewhile, when in my arms
She placed Orestes; didst thou then observe?
While I was fill'd with transport, and ne'er thought
That I enough had kiss'd him, or embraced him,
Didst thou perchance behold her sympathize
In my paternal joy? who would have thought
The child was hers as much as he was mine?
Our common hope, Orestes, the last pledge
Of our affection.—Or I'm much mistaken,
Or these were not the unconcealable
Spontaneous symptoms of a gladden'd heart;
Not the affections of a tender mother;
Not the endearments of a loving consort.
*Elec.* 'Tis true, she's somewhat changed from what she was.
The sunshine of pure joy has ne'er return'd
Since that tremendous day, when thou wert forced,
O father, for the common weal of all,
To immolate thy daughter. Such a wound,
If in a mother's heart 'tis ever heal'd,
Is heal'd with difficulty: from her mind
Two lustres have not banish'd the remembrance
Of the inevitable stratagem,
At the same time compassionate and cruel,
By which her daughter from her breast was torn.

*Aga.* Unhappy I! Does not my recollection
Of that event suffice to punish me?
Was I, than she, on that tremendous day
Less wretched? Was not I as much a father,
As she a mother? But could I alone
Deny her to the' exasperated cries,
The rabid turbulence, the menaces
Of multitudinous and madden'd warriors,
Who, from a cruel oracle, received
Potent incentives to their fiery rage?
What could I do alone 'mid such a crowd
Of haughty kings, for fame and vengeance thirsting,
All equally impatient of restraint?
Those barbarous kings all heard a father's groans,
Yet with that father not one shed a tear:
For when the angry gods in thunders speak,
Nature is silent, innocence in vain
Lifts up her voice: the gods alone are heard.

*Elec.* Ah, trouble not with bitter recollections
The joyful day when thou returnest, father!
If I spoke of it, 'twas but to diminish
The just amazement which arises in thee,
At the constrain'd deportment of my mother.
Add to her former grief, that her sad mind,
Thrown back upon itself, in solitude
Has prey'd upon its pow'rs; she has not had,
Save her two children, any one to whom
She might impart, and thus assuage, her grief;
One was too young, and I perchance, though willing,
Was ill adapted for a comforter.
Thou know'st, that hidden bitterness swells larger:
Thou know'st, that, to drag on in loneliness
The dreary days, is death to ev'ry joy
And life to ev'ry sickly phantasy:
The' expecting thee so long; and ev'ry day
Trembling for thy existence: dost not see it?—
How can she ever be what once she was?
Pardon, I pray thee, the infirmities
Of her enfeebled mind: all brooding thoughts
Drive from thee. Quickly, at thy cheering presence,
The spectres of despondency will vanish.

Believe it, father: thou ere long wilt see
Her tenderness, her faith, her love, return.
*Aga.* At least it cheers me to indulge the hope.
How would it soothe me, if, without restraint,
She would unfold to me her inmost thoughts!—
But, meanwhile, tell me: to what purpose comes,
Where I am king, the offspring of Thyestes?
What does he here? And what does he expect?
I only have learn'd here that he's in Argos;
It seems to me, as if, in naming him,
All felt embarrassment.
*Elec.* ... Of Atreus thou,
He of Thyestes is the offspring; hence
Springs this embarrassment. Ægisthus exiled,
Here came for an asylum: he has foes
E'en in his very brethren.
*Aga.* In that race
Fraternal hatred is hereditary;
Perchance the imprecations of my sire,
The anger of the gods, occasion this.
But that he should, near to the son of Atreus,
Seek an asylum, not a little strange
To me appears. Already I've commanded
That he forthwith should come into my presence;
I wish to see him, from himself to learn
His present fortunes and his future projects.
*Elec.* Ægisthus, father, doubtless is unhappy.
But thou who dost discriminate at once
The various characters of men, wilt learn
Whether or not he merits to be so.
*Aga.* Behold, he comes.—Who knows if he conceals
A base or noble heart, beneath a form
Of more than ordinary gracefulness?

## Scene II.

AGAMEMNON, ELECTRA, ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* Can I, devoid of fear, present myself
Before the glorious conqueror of Troy,
The king of kings sublime? I contemplate
The majesty, the splendor of a god

On thy august and all-commanding brow . . .
August, but at the same time merciful:
And from their thrones the gods oft bend their looks
On the unhappy. Such Ægisthus is;
Ægisthus, hitherto the sport of fortune,
Has common ancestors with thee: one blood
Runs in our veins; from whence I dare to seek,
Within these walls, if not relief, a shelter,
Which might avail, from my oppressive foes,
Who also are my brethren, to protect me.
*Aga.* Thou mak'st me shudder, when thou thus recall'st
That we from one blood spring; 'twere surely better
For all of us to turn our thoughts from thence.
Thyestes' sons, by a decree of fate,
Unhappily must all detest each other;
But are not bound to choose for an asylum
The court of Atreus. Hitherto, Ægisthus,
Thou wert, and still thou art, to me unknown:
I neither hate nor love thee; yet, though willing
To lay aside hereditary discord,
I cannot, without feeling in my breast,
I know not what of strange perplex'd emotions,
Behold the countenance, nor hear the voice,
Of one who is the offspring of Thyestes.
*Ægis.* That the magnanimous Atrides cannot,
And even knows not how to harbor hatred,
This I well knew: a heart sublime like thine
Is inaccessible to base designs.
The valor thou, and not the enmities
Of thy forefathers, hast inherited.
Thou knowest how to punish, . . . or to pardon,
Who dares offend thee: but who, like myself,
Is wretched, and, to thee unknown, might claim
Thy pity, though he were a son of Troy.
Thee Greece selected, not by accident,
The leader of its lofty enterprise;
But deem'd thee monarch greater than all kings,
In courtesy, in valor, justice, faith.
Such I repute thee also, nor e'er deem'd
Myself more safe, than when beneath the shade
Of thy renown: nor did I recollect

That I was born the offspring of Thyestes;
I am indeed the son of adverse fate.
It seem'd to me, that, in adversity,
My blood's defilement had been fully cleansed;
And if thou shudd'redst at Ægisthus' name,
I hoped that afterwards thou wouldest feel,
Within thy royal and most gen'rous breast,
Profound compassion for me, at the names
Of exile, wretched, mendicant, oppress'd.
*Aga.* And if I felt compassion, wouldest thou
From me endure it?
*Ægis.* Who am I, to dare
Despise a gift of thine? . . .
*Aga.* Thou? Thou art sprung
From the most deadly foe my father had:
Thou hatest me, and, more, art bound to hate me;
Nor can I blame thee for it: for our fathers
Eternally have separated us;
Not us alone; our sons, and farthest grandsons.
Impious Thyestes, as thou knowest well,
Ravish'd the spouse of Atreus: Atreus then,
When he had slain them, at a horrid banquet,
Gorged the adult'rer with his children's flesh.
Why should I utter more? Sad tale of blood,
Ah, why recall thy dire vicissitudes?
The bare recital stiffens me with horror.
I see in thee Thyestes and his furies:
Canst thou with other eyes contemplate me?
Do not I offer thee the living image
Of sanguinary Atreus? 'Mid these walls,
Which thou dost see stain'd with thy brothers' blood,
Canst thou remain, without thy ev'ry vein
Boiling with fury at the dreadful thought?
*Ægis.* . . . Horrid, 'tis true, was the revenge of Atreus;
But it was just. Those children that Thyestes
Saw at the execrable banquet placed,
Were fruit of incest. He their father was,
Yes; but clandestinely the faithless spouse
Of the' unavenged and too much injured Atreus
Bore them to him. The outrage was enormous,
Greater the punishment. They brethren were,

'Tis true, but, to forget this sacred tie
Thyestes was the first; the second, Atreus.
It seems as if the anger of the Heavens
'Gainst me had not yet ceased: thy race, less guilty,
Is crown'd with every blessing. Other brethren
Thyestes gave to me; and not, as I,
Are these from incest sprung; the wives of these
I never ravish'd from them; yet against me,
Far more than Atreus was, are they incensed:
They have entirely driv'n me from the throne:
And, more to injure me, have taken from me
My portion of hereditary wealth;
Nor that suffices: cruelly they seek,
Having deprived me of my heritage,
To take my life. Thou see'st, if, without cause,
I seek for an asylum.

*Aga.* Thou hast cause
To seek one; but it should not have been here.

*Ægis.* Where'er I plant my feet, the infamy
Of my paternal name and of my birth
With me I drag; but where should I less blush,
When I give utt'rance to Thyestes' name,
Than in the presence of the son of Atreus?
Thou, wert thou with less weight of glory laden,
Thou, wert thou friendless as Ægisthus is,
The weight thou then wouldst feel, feel all the horror
Which is annex'd no less to a descent
From Atreus than Thyestes. Do thou, then,
Participate in my calamities:
Atrides, act thou tow'rds me, as thou wouldst
That others should tow'rds thee, wert thou Ægisthus.

*Aga.* Ægisthus I? . . . Know, whatsoe'er had been,
However adverse, desperate my fortune,
I never would have turn'd my feet, no, never,
To seek Thyestes' throne.—I hear a voice,
And such a voice proclaiming in my heart,
That I should not place confidence in thee,
That 'tis to pity closed.—Yet, since thou wilt
Solicit my compassion, which I'm not
Accustom'd to refuse, I will endeavor,
(Far as my name and pow'r have influence

In Greece,) in thy hereditary rights
To reinstate thee. Meanwhile, go thou far
From Argos: near to thee should I drag on
Days of anxiety, and restless nights.
The son of Atreus and Thyestes' son
One city cannot hold. P'rhaps e'en within
The boundaries of Greece, we still should be
Too near each other.
*Ægis.* Dost thou drive me hence?
What crime dost thou impute to me?
*Aga.* Thy father.
*Ægis.* Does that suffice?
*Aga.* It is too much. Go hence;
Nor let to-morrow's dawn find thee in Argos;
The help solicited thou shalt obtain,
If I but hear that thou art far away.

## Scene III.

AGAMEMNON, ELECTRA.

*Aga.* Electra, wouldst thou think it? in his presence
I felt throughout my soul a kind of terror
I never felt before.
*Elec.* 'Twas well, O father,
Thus to dismiss him: never do I see him
Without a strange antipathy.
*Aga.* Our sires,
In characters of blood, have graven in us
An interchangeable and lasting hate.
Reason, perchance, may teach me to repress,
What neither time nor reason can destroy.

## Scene IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, ELECTRA.

*Cly.* Ah, why with fresh delays protract the hopes
Of thy expecting people? Even now,
Upon the sacred altars, incense smokes:
Along the paths, engarlanded with flowers,
That to the temple lead, unnumber'd crowds,
Like waves, succeed each other, who, to Heaven,
With loud acclaim, shout Agamemnon's praise.

*Aga.* I should, ere now, not only have indulged
The wishes of my people, but my own,
Had not Ægisthus, in a conference,
Detain'd me here, p'rhaps longer than I wish'd.
*Cly.* Ægisthus?. . .
*Aga.* Yes, Ægisthus. Tell me now,
Why heard I not from thee he was in Argos?
*Cly.* My lord, . . . I deem'd not he would find a place. . .
'Mid thy so many other cares . . .
*Aga.* Ægisthus
Is on his own account to me as nothing;
But he, thou knowest, from a blood descends
Fatal to mine. I do not now suspect
That he came here to injure me; (and could he?)
But yet it seems to me that his appearance
Is ill adapted to the festal homage
That waits on my return: I have commanded,
That ere to-morrow's dawn he goes from hence.—
Meanwhile, let joy unmingled revel here.
O consort, to the temple go I now,
Thus to propitiate the Deities.
Ah! let the genial smile return to lighten
Thy countenance. Those smiles were once to me
Pledges of peace, and of beatitude;
I cannot happy be till they return.

## Scene V.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Elec.* Hear the good king, thou still more worthy consort!
*Cly.* Alas! I am betray'd: thou hast betray'd me,
Electra. Dost thou thus observe thy promise?
Thou to the king Ægisthus hast reveal'd:
So he . . .
*Elec.* I never named him, this I swear.
Elsewhere he learn'd it. All are emulous
To gain his favor in a thousand ways:
All to the monarch fain would useful be:
Rather shouldst thou feel wonder, that he did not
Know this before.
*Cly.* But what imputes he to him?

Of what does he suspect him? Didst thou hear
Their conference? Why doth he drive him hence?
And he, what did he answer? Did Atrides
Of me make mention to him?
*Elec.* Be composed,
O mother! in the bosom of Atrides
Suspicion hath not enter'd. He ne'er dreams
Thou couldst betray him; and from hence art thou
Bound never to betray him. To Ægisthus
His words were not those of an enemy.
*Cly.* But yet he's banish'd instantly from Argos.
*Elec.* O happy queen! thus from the brink thou'rt snatch'd
Of a tremendous precipice at once,
Ere thou advancest farther.
*Cly.* Will he go?
*Elec.* By his departure will thy secret be
Effectually conceal'd: thou yet enjoyest
The whole affection of thy consort's heart;
More than aught else he wishes for thy love:
Impious detractors have not yet infected
His bosom with their poison; all is yet
Untouch'd. But woe, if haply those base miscreants,
And wicked as they're base, for but a moment
See your love, peace, or confidence to waver:
They then will emulously tell him all . . .
Ah, mother! let compassion for thyself,
For us, and even for Ægisthus, move thee!—
Away from Argos, he will be secure
From the king's vengeance . . .
*Cly.* If I lose Ægisthus,
What have I then to shrink from?
*Elec.* Infamy.
*Cly.* O Heav'ns! . . . now leave me to my dreadful fate.
*Elec.* Ah no! What hop'st thou? what wouldst thou attempt? . . .
*Cly.* Thou guiltless daughter of a guilty mother,
Leave me. Thou never more shalt hear me name
Ægisthus: thee I'll not contaminate;
My poor, unhappy daughter should not share
In my flagitious sighs.

*Elec.* Ah, mother!
*Cly.* Go.
Leave me to my own thoughts, and to the flame
That now devours me.—I insist upon it.

### Scene VI.

ELECTRA.

*Elec.* Unhappy I! . . . Unhappy mother! . . . Ah,
What a dire tempest gathers o'er our heads!
If ye, celestial pow'rs, disperse it not,
What will become of our devoted house?

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## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ægis.* O queen, this is our last, our last farewell.
Alas! from whence I fain would have withdrawn,
I see myself proscribed. Yet do I not
Regret, remaining thus, to have obey'd thee.
At thy command, and for thy dear love's sake,
To suffer such an outrage, pleases me,
If thou accept the homage. But my heart
Feels a far diff'rent and severer grief,
In thus forsaking thee; and never more
To have the hope of seeing thee; no, never.
*Cly.* I feel, Ægisthus, that I well deserve
The most severe rebukes; yet from thy lips
Since no rebuke I hear, thy wretchedness,
The horrors of thy cruel destiny,
Too keenly rend my self-accusing heart.
On my account thou suffer'st such disgrace;
And I am ready, for thy sake, to bear
Outrages, anguish, death, and, if need be,
E'en infamy itself. Now is the time
For action.—Shall I ever leave thee? Ah,
Think, while I breathe, that this can never be!

*Ægis.* Perchance, then, thou'rt determined with thyself
To ruin me? What else canst thou perform?
Ah, cease! it is in vain to contradict
The' absolute will of monarch absolute.
Thou know'st his arguments consist in arms;
Nor hears he other arguments from others.
*Cly.* We may, if not oppose, at least delude him;
'Twere well to make the trial. He has fix'd
To-morrow's dawn for thy departure hence;
And that to-morrow's dawn shall witness me
Companion of thy flight.
*Ægis.* O Heav'ns! what say'st thou?
Thou mak'st me tremble. Dear as is thy love,
So much, and more, thy fame to me is dear . . .
Ah, no! I ought not, nor will I permit it:
A day would come, though late, would come at last,
A fatal day, when I should hear thee call
Ægisthus author of thy infamy.
Banishment, death, (tow'rds which, from thee scarce sever'd,
I rush with hasty steps,) would be to me
Less hard, than (wretched I!) to have to hear
Such dire recrimination from thy lips.
*Cly.* Thou only art the author of my life;
And shall I ever be compell'd to name thee
The author of my infamy? e'en thou,
Who in my bosom dost a dagger plunge,
If thou hast heart thus to abandon me . . .
*Ægis.* Rather should I most wantonly immerge
That dagger in thy breast, if I constrain'd thee
To share my fate. Alas! were it accomplish'd,
This meditated flight, who could secure us
From the avenging anger of Atrides?
What refuge is there from his mighty arm?
What shelter? Helen was a fugitive:
Into his realm a pow'rful monarch's son
Conducted her; but what did it avail
That the seducer had both arms and courage,
Ramparts and battlements? By dint of force,
Within his very palace, and beneath
The eyes of his own father, at the foot

Of sacred altars, 'mid the cries, the tears,
The bloodshed, and the menace of his subjects,
Was not his mistress wrested from his arms,
And with her both his kingdom and his life?
I, destitute of all alliances,
A wand'rer, and an exile, what can I
Perform? Thou see'st it clearly, thy design
Is in itself abortive. Thou alone
Wouldst have defied the infamy in vain
Of ignominious flight: and I, possess'd
And destitute of thee at once, should gain
The' eternal blot, the merited disgrace
Of a seducer. In this ill-judged flight,
If thou persist, this is the destiny
That stares us in the face.

*Cly.* Thou clearly see'st
The obstacles, nought else: was genuine love
Ever accustom'd to be so discreet?

*Ægis.* When did a genuine lover ever drag
To certain ruin the belovèd object?
Suffer that I alone in peril be;
And thou wilt see if I can condescend
To know, much less to care for obstacles.—
I see most clearly, that at less than nothing
Thou valuest thy life: I see most clearly
Thy love is dearer to thee far than fame:
Yes, more, far more, than I deserve, thou lov'st me.
Ah! could I heal again thy wounded heart,
Heav'n knows that at the risk of all I prize,
I fain would heal it! . . . all, all would I do; . . .
But cease to love thee: that I cannot do;
I can die easily; and now I wish it.—
But if I am constrain'd, at a great risk,
To see thy fame and life exposed for me, . . .
O lady, choose more certain means than flight.

*Cly.* More certain means? . . . what other means are left? . . .

*Ægis.* To be a banish'd man, . . . to fly, . . . to die; . . .
These are the only means that I have left.
Thou, far from me, deprived of ev'ry hope
Of seeing me again, wilt, from thy heart,

Have quickly chased my image; great Atrides
Will wake a far superior passion there:
Thou, in his presence, many happy days
Wilt yet enjoy.—These auspices may Heaven
Confirm!—I cannot now evince to thee
A surer proof of love than by my flight; . . .
A dreadful, hard, irrevocable proof.
*Cly.* If there be need of death, we both will die.—
But, is there nothing left to try ere this?
*Ægis.* Another plan, perchance, e'en now remains; . . .
But little worthy . . .
*Cly.* And it is?
*Ægis.* Too cruel.
*Cly.* But certain?
*Ægis.* Certain, ah, too much so!
*Cly.* How
Canst thou then hide it from me?
*Ægis.* —How canst thou
Of me demand it?
*Cly.* What then may it be? . . .
I know not . . . Speak: I am too far advanced;
I cannot now retract: perchance already
I am suspected by Atrides; maybe
He has the right already to despise me:
Hence do I feel constrain'd, e'en now, to hate him:
I cannot longer in his presence live;
I neither will, nor dare.—Do thou, Ægisthus,
Teach me a means, whatever it may be,
A means, by which I may withdraw myself
From him for ever.
*Ægis.* Thou withdraw thyself
From him? I have already said to thee
That now 'tis utterly impossible.
*Cly.* What other step remains for me to take? . . .
*Ægis.* —None.
*Cly.* Now, I understand thee.—What a flash,
O what a deadly, instantaneous flash
Of criminal conviction, rushes through
My obtuse mind! What throbbing turbulence
In ev'ry vein I feel!—I understand thee:

The cruel remedy, . . . the only one, . . .
Is Agamemnon's life-blood.
*Ægis.* I am silent . . .
*Cly.* Yet, by thy silence, thou dost ask that blood.
*Ægis.* Nay, rather I forbid it.—To our love,
And to thy life, (of mine I do not speak,)
His living is the only obstacle;
But yet, thou knowest that his life is sacred:
To love, respect, defend it, thou art bound:
And I to tremble at it.—Let us cease:
The hour advances now; my long discourse
Might give occasion to suspicious thoughts.—
At length receive . . . Ægisthus' . . . last farewell.
*Cly.* Ah! hear me . . . Agamemnon to our love . . .
And to thy life? . . . Ah, yes; there are, besides him,
No other obstacles: too certainly
His life is death to us!
*Ægis.* Ah! do not heed
My words: they sprang from too much love.
*Cly.* And love
Reveal'd to me their meaning.
*Ægis.* Hast thou not
Thy mind o'erwhelm'd with horror?
*Cly.* Horror? . . . yes; . . .
But then to part from thee! . . .
*Ægis.* Wouldst have the courage? . . .
*Cly.* So vast my love, it puts an end to fear.
*Ægis.* But the king lives surrounded by his friends:
What sword could find a passage to his heart?
*Cly.* What sword? . . .
*Ægis.* Here open violence were vain.
*Cly.* Yet, . . . treachery . . .
*Ægis.* 'Tis true, he merits not
To be betray'd, Atrides: he who loves
His wife so well: he who, enchain'd from Troy,
In semblance of a slave in fetters, brought
Cassandra, whom he loves, to whom he is
Himself a slave . . .
*Cly.* What do I hear!
*Ægis.* Meanwhile
Expect, that when of thee his love is wearied,

He will divide with her his throne and bed:
Expect that, to thy many other wrongs,
Shame will be added; and do thou alone
Not be exasperated at a deed
That rouses ev'ry Argive.
*Cly.* What said'st thou? . . .
Cassandra chosen as my rival? . . .
*Ægis.* So
Atrides wills.
*Cly.* Then let Atrides perish.
*Ægis.* How? By what hand?
*Cly.* By mine, this very night,
Within that bed, which he expects to share
With this abhorrèd slave.
*Ægis.* O Heav'ns! but think . . .
*Cly.* I am resolved . . .
*Ægis.* Shouldst thou repent? . . .
*Cly.* I do,
That I so long delay'd.
*Ægis.* And yet . . .
*Cly.* I'll do it;
I, e'en if thou wilt not. Shall I let thee,
Who only dost deserve my love, be dragg'd
To cruel death? And shall I let him live
Who cares not for my love? I swear to thee,
To-morrow, thou shalt be the king in Argos.
Nor shall my hand, nor shall my bosom tremble . . .
But who approaches?
*Ægis.* 'Tis Electra . . .
*Cly.* Heav'ns!
Let us avoid her. Do thou trust in me.

## Scene II.

ELECTRA.

*Elec.* Ægisthus flies from me, and he does well;
But I behold that likewise from my sight
My mother seeks to fly. Infatuated
And wretched mother! She could not resist
The guilty eagerness for the last time
To see Ægisthus.—They have here, at length,

Conferr'd together . . . But Ægisthus seems
Too much elated, and too confident,
For one condemn'd to exile . . . She appear'd
Like one disturb'd in thought, but more possess'd
With anger and resentment, than with grief . . .
O Heav'ns! who knows, to what that miscreant base,
With his infernal arts, may have impell'd her!
To what extremities have wrought her up! . . .
Now, now, indeed, I tremble: what misdeeds,
How black in kind, how manifold in number,
Do I behold! . . . Yet, if I speak, I kill
My mother: . . . If I'm silent? . . .

## SCENE III.

ELECTRA, AGAMEMNON.

*Elec.* O my father,
Tell me: hast thou seen Clytemnestra?
*Aga.* I
Thought she already was in these apartments.
But she will soon be here.
*Elec.* I wish she may.
*Aga.* 'Tis certain I expect her here: she knows
That here I would awhile converse with her.
*Elec.* Father, Ægisthus lingers yet in Argos.
*Aga.* Yes, one full day, thou know'st, I have allow'd him;
'Tis almost spent: to-morrow he will go
Far from our sight for ever.—But, what thought,
O daughter, thus disturbs thee? Restless looks
Thou castest round thee, and a mortal paleness
Steals o'er thy face! Whence this inquietude?
A thousand times upon thy falt'ring tongue
I've heard Ægisthus' name, and then thou pausest . . .
*Elec.* I know not why; yet do I wish him gone . . .
Believe me, that a night is a long space
For one who p'rhaps both place and time doth watch
For mischief; night is wont to be the veil
For ev'ry crime. Dear father, I conjure thee,
Ere the sun rises, banish him from Argos.
*Aga.* What dost thou say, Electra? Is he, then,

Hostile to me? Hast thou discover'd this?
Dost thou suspect him of projecting plots? . . .
*Elec.* No plots have I discover'd . . . yet . . . I think not.—
But, he's Thyestes' son.—Upon my heart
There weighs an unknown, cruel, fatal presage.
Perchance my terrors are extravagant,
Yet they are not without a cause. O father,
Thou'rt call'd upon, believe me, not to scorn them,
Although I cannot, and p'rhaps know not how
To give them utt'rance. Meanwhile I retire
To guard the dear Orestes. Once more, father,
I tell thee that the sooner goes Ægisthus,
The more secured will be the peace of all.

## Scene IV.

AGAMEMNON.

*Aga.* Fierce and implacable revenge of Atreus!
How dost thou live transfused in all the blood
Of thy descendants! At Thyestes' name
They shudder. But ought I to be amazed,
When merely at the presence of Ægisthus
Troy's conqueror is dismay'd, if, seeing him,
A simple maid should fear?—If he has plotted,
One nod of mine annihilates at once
Himself, and all his plots. But, is it fitting
That, from suspicion only, I should steel
My heart against him? 'Twould be cruelty,
Thus his already intimated exile
For a few hours to hasten. If I tremble,
Is this his fault? Should he for this be punish'd?

## Scene V.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Aga.* Come, consort, come; and from my heart dispel,
For thou alone canst do it, ev'ry doubt,
Which, on that heart, Electra hath impress'd.
*Cly.* Electra? . . . Doubt? . . . What has she said to thee? . . .
O Heav'ns! . . . She loves thee so, yet on this day

With false suggestions she oppresses thee? . . .
And yet, what doubts? . . .
*Aga.* Ægisthus . . .
*Cly.* What of him?
*Aga.* Ægisthus, he, of whom thou ne'er to me,
As yet, hast spoken, seems to interrupt
Electra's comfort and tranquillity.
*Cly.* . . . Hast thou not sentenced him to banishment? . . .
What can Electra fear from him?
*Aga.* Ah, thou
Art not, as we are, of the blood of Atreus:
Another mind can ne'er conceive the horror
That, in our race, Thyestes' race excites.
Yet to the terrors of a timid damsel
I do not yield, so as to change the hour
Fix'd for his banishment: soon far from hence
Will go Ægisthus; that's for me enough.
I now shall have my heart relieved from care.—
It now is time, full time, beloved consort,
That thou to me unfoldest the deep grief
That weighs upon thy heart, and which I read,
In spite of all thy efforts, on thy face.
If not to me, to whom wilt thou reveal it?
If I be the occasion of thy grief,
Who better than myself can mitigate,
Or find a remedy, or share it with thee? . . .
O Heav'ns! but thou art silent? From the earth
Thine eyes dost never raise? Immoveably,
Suffused with tears, they're fix'd . . . Alas! what then
Electra said to me was too, too true.
*Cly.* Too true? . . . Electra? . . . Did she speak of me? . . .
Dost thou believe her? . . .
*Aga.* Yes, she has, to me,
Betray'd thee; and she has reveal'd to me
The fountain of thy grief . . .
*Cly.* O Heav'ns! . . . Perchance
She has described my faith tow'rds thee as dubious? . . .
I clearly see it all; Electra always
Little regarded me.
*Aga.* Thou art mistaken.
She spoke to me, of thee, as it behoved

A duteous daughter of a much-loved mother:
If otherwise, should I have listen'd to her?
*Cly.* What did she say then?
*Aga.* What, without a blush,
Thou shouldst have told me of thine own accord:
That bitter recollections, in thy heart,
Of thy devoted daughter haunt thee yet.
*Cly.* Iphigenia?... Now I breathe...—Ah, yes,
That day will evermore be fatal to me...
*Aga.* What can I say, that thou already know'st not?
In ev'ry heart, except in thine, I find
Pity for my misfortunes: but, if tears,
Maternal tears, or bitterest reproach,
Could mitigate thy unconsumed affliction,
In tears, or in recriminating words
Why not indulge? Though I deserve it not,
I will endure it: why not weep with me?
Dost thou despise my tears? Thou knowest well,
I were not able to refrain from them,
At the remembrance of my hapless daughter.
Further, O consort, if thou hatest me,
Ah, tell me so: avow'd dissatisfaction
Is more endurable than feign'd regard.
*Cly.* Perchance the cause that in thine eyes I seem
So much more alter'd than I am, arises
From thy not being what thou wert before.
I will e'en speak it out; perchance Cassandra,
Ah, yes, Cassandra, is the cause, whence I
Am less acceptable to thee than erst...
*Aga.* O Heav'ns! Cassandra? Woman, what dost thou
Impute to me? and canst thou think it true?—
When the best spoils among us were divided
Of ravaged Troy, to me the' illustrious damsel,
Deprived by the victorious Grecian sword
Of father and of country, was awarded.
The wonted, but the fatal, law of conquest,
Ordain'd, that, bound in fetters, I should bring her
With me to Argos; an affecting instance
Of the uncertainty of human greatness.
I pity, it is true, Cassandra's fate;
But thee alone I love. Believ'st thou not?

And as a proof of this, to thee I now
Present Cassandra: if it be thy will,
Withdraw her from my sight, and exercise,
Over her lot, unlimited control.
Thee I conjure alone to recollect
That she's the wretched daughter of a king
Once mighty; that to treat her with disdain,
Would be unworthy of thy lofty station.

*Cly.* Dost thou not love her?... wretched I!... O Heav'ns!
And dost thou yet so faithfully love me?—
But can I e'er consent to take from thee
Thy lawful spoil? Ah! no: she's thine by right:
She has already cost thee too much toil,
And too much jeopardy, and too much blood.

*Aga.* Cease, cease. Why give these hints, and not speak out?
If it be such a thought that troubles thee,
And in thy heart if jealous phantasies
Find a reception, thy inquietudes
Are by the roots effectually torn up.
Come, consort, come; and be by thine own eyes
Persuaded, that Cassandra, in thy palace,
Can only be thy first obedient handmaid.

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## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Cly.* Behold the hour.—Now Agamemnon lies
Buried in sleep... And shall he nevermore
Unclose his eyelids to the cheerful light?
This my right hand, the pledge of chaste affection,
Pledge of connubial faith, now arms itself
To work his death?... This have I sworn to do?—
Yes, too irrevocably sworn;... Alas!...
Now is the time to consummate my oath...
My feet, my heart, my hands, throughout I tremble:

What, vile one, would I do? . . . What have I promised? . . .
O how in me hath all my fortitude
At the departure of Ægisthus vanish'd!
I see alone the vast atrocity
Of my enormous crime: I see alone
The blood-besprinkled spectre of Atrides . . .
Ah, what a sight!—Crimes I impute in vain
To thee: ah! no, thou lovest not Cassandra:
Far more than I deserve thou lovest me;
And me alone. Thou hast no other crime,
Except that thou'rt my husband. Ah, Atrides!
And shalt thou from the arms of quiet sleep,
By me, be hurried to the arms of death? . . .
Where shall I hide me when the deed is done? . . .
O treason! Can I ever hope again
For peace? . . . O what a horrid life of tears,
Of rage, and of remorse! . . . How can Ægisthus,
In an ensanguined bed, and at the side
Of an atrocious, parricidal spouse,
Dare to repose, and fear not for himself?—
Of all my shame, and all my wretchedness,
Abominable instrument, far, far
From me, thou instrument of death, O far!
My lover I will lose; and lose with him
My life: but such a hero shall not fall,
Murder'd by me. Thou ornament of Greece,
Terror of Asia, live in all thy glory;
For thy belovèd children, . . . and a wife
More worthy of thy love.—What do I hear? . . .
What stealing footsteps! . . . Who could venture hither
At this dead hour of night? . . . Ægisthus? . . . Ah!
All is then lost! . . .

## Scene II.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ægis.* Hast thou perform'd the deed?
*Cly.* Ægisthus . . .
*Ægis.* What do I behold? O woman,
What dost thou here, dissolved in useless tears?
Tears are unprofitable, late, and vain;
And they may cost us dear.

*Cly.* Thou here? . . . but how? . . .
Wretch that I am! what have I promised thee?
What impious counsel? . . .
*Ægis.* Was not thine the counsel?
Love gave it thee, and fear recants it.—Now,
Since thou'rt repentant, I am satisfied;
Soothed by reflecting that thou art not guilty,
I shall at least expire. To thee I said
How difficult the enterprise would be;
But thou, depending more than it became thee
On that, which is not in thee, virile courage,
Daredst thyself thy own unwarlike hand
For such a blow select. May Heav'n permit,
That the mere project of a deed like this,
May not be fatal to thee! I by stealth,
Protected by the darkness, hither came,
And unobserved, I hope. I was constrain'd
To bring the news myself, that now my life
Is irrecoverably forfeited
To the king's vengeance . . .
*Cly.* What is this I hear?
Whence didst thou learn it?
*Ægis.* More than he would wish,
Atrides hath discover'd of our love;
And I already from him have received
A strict command not to depart from Argos.
And further, I am summon'd to his presence
Soon as to-morrow dawns: thou seeest well
That such a conference to me is death.
But fear not; for I will all means employ
To bear myself the undivided blame.
*Cly.* What do I hear? Atrides knows it all?
*Ægis.* He knows too much: I have but one choice left:
It will be best for me to 'scape by death,
By self-inflicted death, this dang'rous inquest.
I save thy honor thus; and free myself
From an opprobrious end. I hither came
To give thee my last warning; and to take
My last farewell . . . O live; and may thy fame
Live with thee, unimpeach'd! All thoughts of pity
For me now lay aside: if I'm allow'd

By my own hand, for thy sake, to expire,
I am supremely blest.
*Cly.* Alas! . . . Ægisthus . . .
What a tumultuous passion rages now
Within my bosom, when I hear thee speak! . . .
And is it true? . . . Thy death?
*Ægis.* Is more than certain . . .
*Cly.* And I'm thy murderer! . . .
*Ægis.* I seek thy safety.
*Cly.* What wicked fury from Avernus' shore,
Ægisthus, guides thy steps? O, I had died
Of grief, if I had never seen thee more;
But guiltless I had died: spite of myself,
Now, by thy presence, I already am
Again impell'd to this tremendous crime . . .
An anguish, an unutterable anguish,
Invades my bones, invades my ev'ry fibre . . .
And can it be, that this alone can save thee? . . .
But who reveal'd our love?
*Ægis.* To speak of thee,
Who, but Electra, to her father, dare?
Who, to the monarch, breathe thy name, but she?
Thy impious daughter in thy bosom thrusts
The fatal sword; and, ere she takes thy life,
Would rob thee of thy honor.
*Cly.* And ought I
This to believe? . . . Alas! . . .
*Ægis.* Believe it, then,
On the authority of this my sword,
If thou believ'st it not on mine. At least
I'll die in time . . .
*Cly.* O Heav'ns! what wouldst thou do?
Sheathe, I command thee, sheathe that fatal sword.—
O night of horrors! . . . Hear me . . . P'rhaps Atrides
Has not resolved . . .
*Ægis.* What boots this hesitation? . . .
Atrides injured, and Atrides king,
Meditates nothing in his haughty mind,
But blood and vengeance. Certain is my death,
Thine is uncertain: but reflect, O queen,
To what thou'rt destined, if he spare thy life.

And were I seen to enter here alone,
And at so late an hour . . . Alas, what fears
Harrow my bosom when I think of thee!
Soon will the dawn of day deliver thee
From racking doubt: that dawn I ne'er shall see:
I am resolved to die . . . —Farewell . . . for ever!
*Cly.* Stay, stay . . . Thou shalt not die.
*Ægis.* By no man's hand,
Assuredly, except my own:—or thine,
If so thou wilt. Ah, perpetrate the deed;
Kill me; and drag me, palpitating yet,
Before thy judge austere; my blood will be
A proud acquittance for thee.
*Cly.* Madd'ning thought! . . .
Wretch that I am! . . . Shall I be thy assassin? . . .
*Ægis.* Shame on thy hand, that cannot either kill
Who most adores thee, or who most detests thee.
Mine then must serve . . .
*Cly.* Ah! . . . no . . .
*Ægis.* Dost thou desire
Me, or Atrides, dead?
*Cly.* Ah! what a choice! . . .
*Ægis.* Thou art compell'd to choose.
*Cly.* I death inflict? . . .
*Ægis.* Or death receive: when thou hast witness'd mine.
*Cly.* Ah, then the crime is too inevitable!
*Ægis.* The time now presses.
*Cly.* But, . . . the courage, . . . strength? . . .
*Ægis.* Strength, courage, all, will love impart to thee.
*Cly.* Must I then with this trembling hand of mine
Plunge . . . in my husband's heart . . . the sword? . . .
*Ægis.* The blows
Thou wilt redouble with a steady hand
In the hard heart of him who slew thy daughter.
*Cly.* Far . . . from my hand . . . I hurl'd the sword . . .
in anguish . . .
*Ægis.* Behold a steel, and of another temper:
The clotted blood-drops of Thyestes' sons
Still stiffen on its frame: do not delay
To furbish it once more in the vile blood
Of Atreus; go, be quick: there now remain

But a few moments; go. If awkwardly
The blow thou aimest, or if thou shouldst be
Again repentant, lady, ere 'tis struck,
Do not thou any more tow'rds these apartments
Thy footsteps turn: by my own hands destroy'd,
Here wouldst thou find me in a sea of blood
Immersed. Now go, and tremble not; be bold,
Enter, and save us by his death.—

## Scene III.

ÆGISTHUS, AGAMEMNON *within.*

*Ægis.* Come forth,
Thyestes, from profound Avernus; come,
Now is the time: within this palace now
Display thy dreadful shade. A copious banquet
Of blood is now prepared for thee, enjoy it:
Already o'er the heart of thy foe's son
Hangs the suspended sword; now, now he feels it:
An impious consort grasps it: it was fitting
That she, not I, did this: so much more sweet
To thee will be the vengeance, as the crime
Is more atrocious... An attentive ear
Lend to the dire catastrophe with me;
Doubt not she will accomplish it: disdain,
Love, terror, to the necessary crime
Compel the impious woman.—
*Aga.* Treason! Ah!...
My wife?... O Heav'ns!... I die... O trait'rous deed!...
*Ægis.* Die thou, yes, die. And thou redouble, woman,
The blows redouble; all the weapon hide
Within his heart: shed, to the latest drop,
The blood of that fell miscreant: in our blood
He would have bathed his hands.

## Scene IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS.

*Cly.* What have I done?
Where am I?...

*Ægis.* Thou hast slain the tyrant: now
At length thou'rt worthy of me.
*Cly.* . . . See, with blood
The dagger drips; . . . my hands, my face, my garments,
All, all are blood . . . O, for a deed like this,
What vengeance will be wreak'd! . . . I see already,
Already to my breast that very steel
I see hurl'd back, . . . and by what hand! . . . I freeze, . . .
I faint, . . . I shudder . . . I dissolve with horror . . .
My strength, . . . my utt'rance, . . . fail me . . . where am I? . . .
What have I done? . . . Alas! . . .
*Ægis.* Tremendous cries
Resound on ev'ry side throughout the palace:
'Tis time to show the Argives what I am,
And reap the harvest of my long endurance.

## Scene V.

ELECTRA, ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Elec.* It still remains for thee to murder me,
Thou impious, vile assassin of my father . . .
But what do I behold? O Heav'ns! . . . my mother? . . .
Flagitious woman, dost thou grasp the sword?
Didst thou commit the murder?
*Ægis.* Hold thy peace.
Stop not my path thus; quickly I return;
Tremble: for now I am the king of Argos.
Far more important is it that I kill
Orestes, than Electra.

## Scene VI.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA.

*Cly.* Heav'ns! . . . Orestes? . . .
Ægisthus, now I know thee . . .
*Elec.* Give it me:
Give me that steel.
*Cly.* Ægisthus! . . . Stop . . . Wilt thou
Murder my son? Thou first shalt murder me.

## Scene VII.

ELECTRA.

*Elec.* O night! . . . O father! . . . Ah, it was your deed,
Ye gods, this thought of mine to place Orestes
In safety first.—Thou wilt not find him, traitor.—
Ah live, Orestes, live: and I will keep
This impious steel for thy adult right hand.
The day, I hope, will come, when I in Argos
Shall see thee the avenger of thy father.

VI.

# ORESTES.

## THE ARGUMENT.

THE characters in this play are the same as in the preceding tragedy of *Agamemnon*, except that the murdered king is replaced by his son Orestes, and Pylades his inseparable friend and companion. Ten years have elapsed since the murder: Ægisthus is established on the throne of Argos; Clytemnestra has been incessantly haunted by the memory of her crime; Electra lives in hopes of seeing vengeance taken on Ægisthus; and Orestes has arrived at an age when he is able to take that vengeance.

The earlier part of the play is occupied by Clytemnestra's description of her sufferings, and her now mingled terror and diminished love of Ægisthus; by the reproaches and lamentations of Electra, and her prayers for the return of Orestes; and by the mutual quarrels and recriminations of Ægisthus and the guilty queen.

Orestes and Pylades now arrive at the palace, with the view of consummating the long-delayed revenge of the former. Pylades has great difficulty in restraining his friend's impetuosity, but they at length agree to present themselves to Ægisthus as messengers sent by the king of Phocis, at whose court Orestes had been brought up, to

announce to him the accidental death of the latter. Electra appears in their presence on her way to the tomb of Agamemnon, which she points out to them. The sight throws Orestes into uncontrollable emotion, and, after a touching scene, he and Electra are revealed as brother and sister. After Electra has left, and Clytemnestra enters on the scene, Orestes tells his mother the pretended story of his death, and Pylades asks for an interview with the king, to deliver the message to that effect. Clytemnestra bursts into despair when alone, and a fierce scene takes place between her and Ægisthus, when she tells him the supposed news. At length, in the presence of the king, Pylades gives a circumstantial account of Orestes having been killed in a chariot-race. Ægisthus seems inclined to believe the story, but Orestes' eagerness awakes suspicion in him; Pylades tries to excuse his conduct by saying that he (Orestes) is Pylades, overcome by emotion at the death of his friend. But this does not satisfy Ægisthus, who now disbelieves the whole story, and orders the pair to be chained and thrown into prison. From the conduct of Electra, he at once suspects the real truth; and when his suspicion is changed to certainty, he exults at finding that at length he has in his power the hated son of Agamemnon, and vows that he will kill Electra first, then Pylades, and then Orestes.

In the last act, however, the people of Argos rise, release Orestes and Pylades, and recognize Orestes as their rightful king, and call for the death of Ægisthus. The tyrant flies, and, notwithstanding the entreaties of Electra, Clytemnestra cannot resist her destiny, and hastens to join him. Ægisthus is captured and slain by Orestes, who unwittingly kills his mother at the same time. The curtain falls on the blank despair of Orestes, whom the Furies at once begin to persecute.

This tragedy is founded on, and closely follows the plot of the *Choëphori* of Æschylus, and, like that play, forms a natural sequel to *Agamemnon*. In Æschylus, however, Orestes appears to kill his mother purposely. The *Electra* of Sophocles is based on the same story, which, with variations, is also to be found in Homer's Odyssey, and in Pindar (Pyth. xi. 26). The extreme violence of the action from beginning to end is considered by Sismondi to be a defect, and to be calculated to weary the spectator, whilst none of the softer affections are depicted by way of contrast. Lampredi calls it a "stupendous tragedy, superior to any he has ever read or heard performed;" and none of his works were more carefully revised and rewritten by Alfieri than this. He considered that it ought to be acted to the same audience and on the next night to *Agamemnon*, to be fully appreciated, its sole motive being vengeance for the murder of the great king. The character of Clytemnestra was his greatest difficulty. As a whole, he preferred this tragedy to all those we have as yet examined.

# ORESTES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| ÆGISTHUS. | PYLADES. |
| CLYTEMNESTRA. | *Soldiers.* |
| ELECTRA. | *Followers of Orestes and Pylades.* |
| ORESTES. | |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Argos.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ELECTRA.

*Elec.* O fatal, horrible, atrocious night,
O night, for ever present to my thoughts!
Now, for two lustres, ev'ry year I've witness'd,
Pall'd in ensanguined darkness, thy return;
Yet, 'tis not shed, the blood of expiation,
The blood that thou requirest.—O remembrance!
O Agamemnon, my unhappy father!
Within these thresholds I beheld thee slain;
And by what hand!—To his most sacred tomb,
O night, thou guidest me, by all unseen.
Let not Ægisthus, ere to-morrow dawn,
Let him not hither come to interrupt
The tears, which I disconsolately bring
In annual tribute to my father's ashes!
The only tribute which I now can give thee
Of tears, O father, and the only pledge
Of hope, not yet quite banish'd from my bosom,

Of possible revenge. Ah! yes; I swear:
If yet I live in Argos, in this palace,
Near a flagitious mother, and the slave
Of an Ægisthus, it is that revenge,
That possible revenge, and nothing else,
That gives me courage for the life I lead.
Orestes yet, though far from Argos, lives.
'Twas I that saved thee, brother; and for thee
I keep myself; until the day arise,
When thou shalt shed upon my father's tomb,
Not tears, but life-blood of an enemy.

## Scene II.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA.

*Cly.* Daughter.
*Elec.* What voice is that? O Heav'ns! thou comest? . . .
*Cly.* Ah! fly not from me, daughter; I would share
With thee the sacred task; in vain Ægisthus
Prohibits me: he will not know it. Come;
Let us together to the tomb repair.
*Elec.* Of whom?
*Cly.* . . . Of . . . thy . . . unhappy . . . father.
*Elec.* Ah!
Wherefore not say, of thy unhappy consort?
Thou darest not; and well that fear becomes thee.
But how dar'st thou thy footsteps thither bend?
Thou with his blood defiled?
*Cly.* Ten years have pass'd
Since that atrocious night; ten years I've wept
Unceasingly my guilt.
*Elec.* What length of time
Can e'er atone for such a deed as that?
E'en were thy tears eternal, that were nothing.
Dost thou not see it? On these horrid walls
Still the coagulated blood-drops stand
Which thou hast shed: ah! fly: at sight of thee,
Behold, it liquefies, and reddens. Fly,
O thou, whom I ne'er can, nor ought to call
My mother: go; return to the vile bed

Of infamous Ægisthus. At his side
As consort stand: nor further dare advance
To trouble Agamemnon's quiet bones.
E'en now his terrible, indignant shade
Rises against us, and repels thee back.
*Cly.* Thou mak'st me shudder . . . once thou lovedst me, . . .
O daughter! . . . O remorse! . . . O agony! . . .
Think'st thou I can be happy with Ægisthus?
*Elec.* Happy? Dost thou deserve it? Heav'n provides
That man shall never happy be for crimes.
Thy agony in fate's eternal archives
Hath been for all eternity engraved.
Thou only provest yet the first faint symptoms
Of future torment: near the dreary waves
Of black Cocytus 'tis reserved for thee
In all its plenitude. There art thou doom'd
To bear the menacing and angry looks
Of thy slain consort: there wilt thou behold,
On thy arrival, the indignant spectres
Of thy forefathers shudder: thou wilt hear
The' inexorable judge of hell regret,
That to thy crime no punishment is equal.
*Cly.* Wretch that I am! What can I ask for? . . . pity . . .
No, that I merit not . . . And yet, O daughter,
Couldst thou but see the anguish of my heart . . .
But who, without abhorrence, could explore
The deep recesses of a heart like mine,
Contaminated by such infamy?
I cannot blame thy hatred, or thy rage.
In life, already, all the pangs I prove
Of dark Avernus. Scarcely had the blow
Been by my hand accomplish'd, ere repentance,
Swift, but too late, tremendously assail'd me.
E'en from that moment, the ensanguined spectre
Both day and night before my blasted eyes
Horribly rises. Wheresoe'er I move,
Preceding me, the phantom I behold
Trailing along my desolated path
A track of sable blood: 'tis on my bed;
'Tis on my throne; and worse, 'tis in my heart:

If, as it seldom happens, I should close
My weary eyes upon my restless couch,
The spectre haunts my dreams; and I behold him
Plunge in the wide wounds of his bleeding breast
His rabid hands, then wildly draw them forth
Dripping with gore, and in a threat'ning posture,
With fingers clench'd, wring them before my face.—
To horrid nights succeed more horrid days:
Thus I exist in a protracted death.—
O daughter, (for thou art my daughter still,
Whate'er I be) weep'st not at pangs like these?

*Elec.* I weep . . . ah, yes . . . I weep.—But tell me, mother,
Dost thou not yet enjoy the throne usurp'd?
Does not Ægisthus with thee also reap
The common harvest of your common crime?—
For thee I should not weep; far less should I
Yield credence to thy tears. Go thou, re-enter;
Leave me that I alone may execute . . .

*Cly.* O daughter, hear me; . . . stay a moment longer . . .
I am enough distress'd. I hate myself
More than thou hatest me . . . Too late I knew
Ægisthus . . . Ah! . . . What do I say? Atrides
Scarce was no more, ere fully I discover'd
The baseness of his soul; yet still I loved him.
I felt, and still I feel, the speechless conflict
Of a remorseful love . . . Remorse, and love,
Unnatural pair, of me alone ye're worthy! . . .
What recompense Ægisthus renders me
For my delinquency, I clearly see:
I see contempt in spurious love conceal'd:
But so much am I fall'n, that what atonement
Can I now offer for my turpitude,
That is not criminal?

*Elec.* A lofty death
Atones for ev'ry crime. But, since thou hast not
The weapon, reeking with thy husband's blood,
Against thy bosom hurl'd; since tow'rds thyself
Thy parricidal arm hath seem'd to lose
Its wonted intrepidity; ah, why
Hast thou not turn'd, or turn'st thou not, thy sword
Against the bosom of that miscreant vile,

Who takes from thee thy honor, peace, and fame,
And his paternal rights from thy Orestes?
*Cly.* Orestes? . . . O that name! Whene'er I hear it,
In ev'ry vein my blood congeals.
*Elec.* My blood
Boils in each vein, Orestes' name on hearing.
Thou feelest now, as such a mother should,
A mother's love. But yet Orestes lives.
*Cly.* And may the gods a lengthen'd life accord him:
Ah, may he never his incautious feet
Tow'rds Argos turn. I am a wretched mother;
Even for ever have I from myself
Banish'd my son; alas! I am compell'd,
E'en in proportion as I love him, now
To supplicate the gods, that they no more
May bring him in my sight.
*Elec.* I feel a love
Quite opposite to thine. For his return
I wish, and weary Heav'n with prayers to grant it;
And in the hope of that return I live.
I trust, that one day he will dare to come,
As should the son of murder'd Agamemnon.

## Scene III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA.

*Ægis.* Doth then the livelong day seem short, O queen,
For thy afflictions? Ere the morning's dawn
To fresh regrets thou risest? Yield the past
To merited oblivion; and consent,
By being so thyself, to make me happy.
*Cly.* Ægisthus, thou wouldst reign, nought else; thou reignest.
Now, what solicitude canst feel for me,
Or for my grief? Eternal is that grief;
And that thou knowest.
*Ægis.* I know well what fount
Thus ministers to thee perennial tears:
Thou wouldst, at all events, preserve Electra;
With thy solicitations I complied,
For thy misfortune and my own. Henceforth

That aspect of insufferable grief
I from thine eyes will take away: I will
Henceforth the palace gladden; and from thence,
With her, will banish tears.
*Elec.* Drive me away;
Still ever will this palace, where thou dwell'st,
Be the abode of tears. What other voice
Save that of lamentation, can be heard
Where an Ægisthus reigns? But it must give
Exquisite pleasure to Thyestes' son,
To see the progeny of Atreus weep.
*Cly.* Daughter, . . . he is my husband.—Ah, reflect,
Ægisthus, that she is my daughter . . .
*Ægis.* She?
She is the daughter of Atrides.
*Elec.* He?
He is Atrides' murderer.
*Cly.* Electra! . . .
Ægisthus, pity . . . Dost thou see that tomb,
That dreadful tomb, . . . and art not satisfied?
*Ægis.* Woman, be more consistent with thyself.
Say, whose hand laid Atrides in that tomb?
*Cly.* Fatal rebuke! Can more be wanting now
To fill the measure of my bitterness?
The very instigator to it, now,
Upbraids me for the crime.
*Elec.* O new delight!
O sole delight with which, for full two lustres,
My heart has been refresh'd! I see you both
A prey to hatred and remorse. At length
I the retributory transports hear
Of a flagitious love: at length are fled
All your illusions; thoroughly ye know
Each other. May contempt impel to hate;
And hate to further blood.
*Cly.* O horrible,
But too well merited sad augury!
O Heav'ns! . . . Ah! . . . daughter . . .
*Ægis.* From thyself alone
Arises all our discord. Such a daughter
Well may a mother lose, nor feel herself

More childless than before. I might reclaim
That which I weakly granted to her prayers;
But I am not accustom'd to reclaim
That which I once have given; not to see thee,
Suffices to our peace. To-day, I yield thee
To the most abject of my slaves as wife;
With him thou shalt be banish'd, and shall bring him,
Amid the squalor of vile poverty,
As dowry, thy eternal tears.

*Elec.* Ægisthus,
Speak'st thou of other infamy than thine?
What slave of thine is vile compared with thee?
Or more degraded, what?

*Ægis.* Depart.

*Elec.* I know
That thou hast saved my life to swell my pangs:
But, come what may, this hand of mine, which Heaven
P'rhaps dooms to lofty purposes . . .

*Ægis.* Now go;
Once more I say it.

*Cly.* Be thou silent now, . . .
O daughter: . . . go, I pray thee: . . . by and bye . .

*Elec.* Sever'd from you, there is no punishment
Which e'er can equal that of seeing you.

## Scene IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Cly.* To hear severe rebukes from ev'ry tongue,
And merit them! . . . O life! to thee what death
Can ever be compared?

*Ægis.* Oft have I told thee,
That while Electra in our presence stays,
We ne'er can breathe in peace: 'tis time, high time,
That she were slain; the safety of the state,
Thy peace and mine, demand it: furthermore,
By her offensive pride she stands condemn'd:
But still thy tears entreat me to absolve her.
Oppose no more her banishment: I will it,
And it were utterly in vain for thee
To seek to thwart that will.

*Cly.* Oft have I told thee:
Whatever be Electra's destiny,
Never with us, O never, can be peace:
'Mid apprehension thou, I 'mid remorse,
In guilty terrors both, we shall drag on
A horrid apprehensive life for ever.
Is there another hope?
*Ægis.* I ne'er look back;
I of the future think: I ne'er can be
Happy, while seed is living of Atrides:
Orestes lives; in him, with years, matures
Hatred tow'rds us; he lives, and lives alone
On the fell project of ferocious vengeance.
*Cly.* Poor youth! he lives; but far from us, unknown,
Helpless, obscure.—Ah cruel! to a mother
Canst thou lament thus, that her son yet lives?
*Ægis.* Yes, to a mother, who has slain her husband,
Thus I may well lament. Him to our love
Thou sacrificedst; shouldst thou not this other
Equally to my safety sacrifice?
*Cly.* O thou, ne'er satisfied with blood and crimes!
Thou hast already caught me in the snare
Of feign'd regard: thy cruel manners since
Too well have proved this truth! . . . Still in my breast,
E'en yet a flame too strong, and too sincere,
I cherish; and thou knowest this too well! . . .
Hence mayst thou judge, if I can fail to love
An innocent and only son. What heart
Is there so hard as not to weep his lot? . . .
*Ægis.* Thou, who with one blow two didst immolate.
The self-same sword cut off the father's life,
And graved, in sable characters of blood,
The son's death-warrant. My procrastination,
Fortune, the subtle foresight of Electra,
Have saved Orestes. But what matters that?
Dar'st thou proclaim as innocent a son,
Whose father thou hast slain, whose throne usurped?
*Cly.* O words of blood! . . . O son, deprived of all,
Nothing thou givest him, who of that all
Thus robb'd thee, if thou givest not thy life!
*Ægis.* And, tell me, while he lives, are they secure

Who triumph in his spoils? Above thy head
His sword for ever hangs. Son of Atrides,
The last remains of that flagitious race,
Uniting ev'ry crime, his fierce revenge
Would not alone with my blood be appeased.
Anxiety for thee, more than myself,
Weighs on my bosom when I think of him.
Thou heard'st the dreadful and oracular voice,
Predicting that Orestes would one day
Be fatal to his parents? Wretched mother,
That voice belongs to thee; whene'er the power
Is mine, I ought to hasten on his death;
Thou, to endure it silently.

*Cly.* Alas! . . .
My blood . . .

*Ægis.* Orestes is not of thy blood:
He is the impure remnant of the blood
Of Atreus: of a blood to ev'ry crime
Predestined. Thou his father hast beheld,
By wickedest ambition hurried on,
His daughter, on the altar, immolate:
Orestes, treading in his father's steps,
Atrides' son, will sacrifice his mother.
Mother too blind, and too compassionate!
That son now holds himself prepared to slay thee:
Behold him; tremble . . .

*Cly.* To avenge his father,
Suffer him, then, to pierce this guilty breast.
Another greater crime, if such there be,
P'rhaps should atone for mine: But thou, Ægisthus,
Whatever destiny may threaten me,
I do conjure thee, by the injured blood
Of Agamemnon, cease from all attempt
To plot against Orestes: far from us,
And exiled, he may live; but let him live.
Orestes would not dare to turn his steps
Towards his native Argos; if he came,
My breast should shield him from thy violence . . .
But if he came, 'tis Heav'n will bring him hither;
And who avails 'gainst Heav'n? What doubt remains?
I a predestinated victim am.

*Ægis.* Awhile refrain from tears. Orestes lives;
And I but faintly hope that in my power
He ever will be found. But, if the day
Should e'er arrive, when I indeed suffice
To consummate a necessary deed,
Which thou in vain call'st criminal, that day
Thou shalt, if so thou wilt, resume thy tears.

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## ACT II.

### Scene I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

*Ores.* This is my palace, Pylades.—O joy!
Belovèd Pylades, embrace me: now
The day at length arises, when I may
Relieve thee from thy long calamities
Endured in my behalf.
*Py.* Orestes, love me;
Listen to my advice; this, this alone
Is the relief that for myself I ask.
*Ores.* At last we have arrived.—Here Agamemnon
Fell massacred; and here Ægisthus reigns!—
This palace, though I left it but a child,
I find familiar still. Just Heav'n in time
Conducts me hither.—Twice five years have pass'd,
This very night have pass'd, since, slain by treason,
My father made these palace walls resound
With mournful cries. O! well I recollect it:
Electra, swiftly through this very court,
Carried me thither, where, with pitying arms,
Strophius received me, who, no less to me
Than to thyself, has proved himself a father.
And he, all trembling, through that secret gate
Fled with me: and behind me there resounded
A long confusion of lamenting voices,
Which made me weep, and shriek aloud, and tremble,
I knew not wherefore: Strophius, weeping too,
Smother'd my wailings with his hand; embraced me,

And with his bitter tears bedew'd my face;
He to the solitary shore, where late
We landed, meanwhile with his burden came,
And to the prosp'rous winds unreef'd his sails.—
In manhood I return, at length in manhood;
Of hope, of courage, anger, and revenge,
Full I return, whence I departed once,
Weeping, a helpless child.

*Py.* Here reigns Ægisthus,
And here, with fearless voice, thou speak'st of vengeance?
Incautious! Dost thou such beginning give
To such an enterprise? Behold; already
The morning dawns; and even yet if night
Here reign'd for ever, these are palace walls;
Speak, then, in whispers: ev'ry wall may hide
A spy beneath its shade. Ah, let us not
Now lose the harvest of so many vows,
And of so many wand'rings, that, at length,
After such danger, to these shores conduct us.

*Ores.* O sacred shores! 'tis true, it seem'd to me,
That unknown pow'rs repell'd me back from you:
Since we from Crissa had our anchor loosed,
The winds seem'd always to forbid my progress
Towards my native shores. New obstacles
By thousands and by thousands always rising,
New perils, made me tremble, that the day
Would never come when I should plant my foot
In Argos. But that day at length is come;
I am in Argos.—If I have surmounted,
Belovèd Pylades, all forms of danger,
To thee, and thy inflexible regard,
Do I ascribe it. Ere I hither came,
The' avenger of such infamous misdeeds,
P'rhaps to no dubious test the gods would bring
Courage in me, in thee fidelity.

*Py.* Courage? thou hast too much. How many times
For thee I've trembled! I, thou know'st, am ready
Ev'ry vicissitude to share with thee;
But, O reflect, that nothing yet is done
Of what we have to do. We have arrived,
No more. Amid the multifarious means

To such a task, 'tis fitting now that we
Inflexibly adhere to one alone,
And that the best; and that we should resolve
What pretext to select, with what feign'd name
To give a reason for our coming hither:
An adequate foundation we should lay
For such an edifice.
*Ores.* Eternal justice
Will be our sure foundation. To myself
That blood is due for which athirst I come.—
The surest means? Behold it; see my sword.
*Py.* O youthful turbulence! For blood thou thirstest?
Others, defended by a thousand swords,
For thine thirst also.
*Ores.* To appal Ægisthus,
Already self-appall'd, my name suffices;
Too potent is my name. And of what temper
Can he a breast-plate or a shield possess,
That I can pierce it not?
*Py.* He has a shield,
A tough, impenetrable, doughty shield,
His innate baseness. Round his person throng
Innumerable satellites: and he,
Trembling, though safe, stands in the midst of them . . .
*Ores.* To name me, and disperse these satellites,
Were the same thing.
*Py.* To name thee, and be slain,
Were the same thing: and slain by what a death!
Even these satellites possess a faith
And courage of their own: they from the tyrant
Draw their subsistence; nor would have him dead,
Except themselves destroy him.
*Ores.* In my cause
The people then . . .
*Py.* Dost hope that in the heart
Of the base people, either hate or love
Can ever be eternalized? Corrupted,
Degraded, now it sees one tyrant fall,
And now another rise; not one it loves,
And yields to all; forgetting an Atrides.
At an Ægisthus trembles.

*Ores.* 'Tis, alas,
But too, too true! . . . But thou dost not, like me,
Before thine eyes behold a murder'd father,
Bleeding and unavenged, who asks, expects,
Insists on having vengeance.
*Py.* Hence am I
More qualified that vengeance to obtain.—
Now hear me. We to all are here unknown;
And wear a stranger's garb: unquiet tyrants,
Whether from inclination or from fear,
Watch narrowly the deeds and steps of all.
The daylight dawns; as soon as we are seen,
We shall be dragg'd into Ægisthus' presence:
What shall we say? . . .
*Ores.* Strike; in the miscreant's breast
A thousand wounds inflict; and hold our peace.
*Py.* Cam'st thou for certain death, or certain vengeance?
*Ores.* Provided both be certain: first to slay,
And then be slain.
*Py.* Orestes, by our friendship,
And by thy murder'd father, I beseech thee
A little while refrain: for a few hours
Yield to my judgment; I will give the rest
To thy revenge: rather than with the sword,
Baseness should be assail'd by artifice.
Ægisthus should believe us messengers
Sent from my father; bearers to himself
In Argos, of thy death.
*Ores.* Belie my name?
To an Ægisthus? I?
*Py.* Thou must be silent;
Thou need'st not lie, for I will speak for thee:
The' imposture will be mine, and mine alone:
We then shall hear the answer of Ægisthus
To this intelligence, and shall discover
Electra's destiny.
*Ores.* Electra! Ah!
Much do I fear that she no longer lives.
Tidings of her I never have received.
Ægisthus certainly would never spare
The offspring of Atrides.

*Py.* But her mother
Perchance has saved her: and if so it be,
Think that she still is in the tyrant's power;
And that we might, by only naming her,
Ensure her death. In a far diff'rent guise,
Thou know'st that Strophius might himself, with arms
And troops, soon re-establish thee in Argos;
But open war, however prosperous,
Would give thee nothing but thy throne and sceptre:
Meanwhile the impious tyrant would escape;
And of his rage (if he has not ere now
Slain her) Electra would remain the victim;
Thy sole belovèd sister; she to whom
Thou ow'st thy life. Thou see'st the pressing need
There is for caution: lofty is thy purpose;
A purpose mightier far than to regain
A throne usurp'd: defeat it not, Orestes.
Who knows? thy mother p'rhaps is penitent . . .

*Ores.* Ah! speak not thou to me of her.

*Py.* Of her,
Nor aught besides.—I only ask of thee
To list to my advice. If thou wilt not,
Those gods who by thy side have planted me,
No longer will protect thee.

*Ores.* I yield all,
I swear to thee, except the deed of death;
I will behold the slayer of my father,
Behold him, nor unsheathe my thirsty sword:
Be this the earliest effort of my virtue,
O father, which I consecrate to thee.

*Py.* Silence; methinks I hear a stealing footstep . .
Dost see? a woman in a mourning garment
Advances from the palace. For a while
Let us withdraw ourselves.

*Ores.* She comes this way.

## Scene II.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES.

*Elec.* For once, Ægisthus is a short time absent;
I now, without constraint, may bring my tribute . . .

What do I see? Two youths whom by their dress
And by their mien, I do not recognise . . .
They watch me; they seem strangers.
*Ores.* Didst thou hear?
Ægisthus' name she mention'd.
*Py.* Ah! be silent.
*Elec.* O youthful strangers, (for I deem you such,)
Say: to these walls what brings you?
*Py.* Let me speak;
Stand thou apart.—We strangers are, 'tis true;
Here we come bearers of important tidings.
*Elec.* Are they intended for Ægisthus?
*Py.* Yes.
*Elec.* What tidings can they be? . . . Pursue your steps.
Ægisthus now is absent: in the palace
Ye may repose yourselves till he return.
*Py.* And his return? . . .
*Elec.* Before the day is spent,
In a few hours, 'tis certain. Thanks and honors
He will bestow on you, as is your due,
If grateful be the tidings.
*Py.* To Ægisthus
They will be grateful; in themselves unlucky.
*Elec.* How my heart beats!—Unlucky? . . . Are they such
That I may know their import?
*Py.* Pardon me.
Thou seem'st to me a lady of high birth:
But that the king should hear these tidings first
Appears to me incumbent . . . By my words
Thou seemest troubled? . . . What? Can any news
Brought from a distant land affect thee, then?
*Elec.* Affect me? . . . no . . . But, from what land are ye
*Py.* Grecians are we: from Crete we lately came.—
But in thee, more than from thy mourning garments,
I, from thy looks, thy gestures, and thy words,
Trace the impression of profound distress.
May I enquire? . . .
*Elec.* What sayest thou? . . . in me?—
Thou know'st that pity in a woman's heart
Is easily excited. Mournful news,

Although not mine, afflicts me: I would hear it;
And then, when I have heard it, I am sorry.
My heart is human.
*Py.* Wouldst thou deem the wish
To know thy name presumptuous? . . .
*Elec.* That to know
Could not advantage you; and to my grief,
(Since grief thou see'st in me,) to speak my name
Would surely be no solace.—It is true,
That, far from Argos . . . some solicitude . . .
Some fond anxiety perchance, . . . to me
Might possibly possess some interest.—
But, no: I clearly see that your arrival
In no wise is connected with myself.
Yet, when a stranger lands upon these shores,
Involuntary feelings rush upon me;
I feel my timid heart, 'twixt hope and fear,
Waver tumultuously.—Yes, I'm convinced
Ye ought not to reveal to me the purpose
Of your arrival. Enter: I meanwhile
Pursue my pilgrimage to yonder tomb.
*Ores.* Tomb! what? where? whose?
*Elec.* *Dost thou not see it? Yonder?*
The tomb of Agamemnon.
*Ores.* Sight of woe!
*Elec.* And dost thou shudder at the mournful sight?
And have the tidings of the dreadful death
That he received in Argos reach'd your ears?
*Py.* Where have they not been heard?
*Ores.* O sacred tomb
Of him, the king of kings, dost need a victim?
Thou shalt have one.
*Elec.* What is it that he says?
*Py.* I heard him not.
*Elec.* Did he not speak of victim?
And why? Say, is the memory of Atrides
Sacred to him? . . .
*Py.* A little while ago
He lost his father: and each mournful object
Excites emotion in his pious heart;
Strange fits of frenzy seize him suddenly.—

Compose thyself, I pray.—What, art thou mad?
How could I ever trust in thee?
*Elec.* His eyes,
Motionless, eager, terrible in aspect,
He fixes on the tomb . . . —O thou, who art thou,
Thus generously daring? . . .
*Ores.* Leave to me
The care of this, to me.
*Py.* He hears thee not.
Pardon, O lady, his too frantic ravings:
Regard not what he says: he is insane.—
Art thou determined then, at all events,
Thus to betray thyself?
*Ores.* Into the traitor,
Time after time, my weapon will I plunge
As many times, as from his horrid wound
Thou drops of blood didst shed.
*Elec.* He's not insane.
A father didst thou say . . .
*Ores.* A father, yes,
Was torn from me. O rage! and he remains
Yet unavenged?
*Elec.* If thou art not Orestes,
Who art thou, then?
*Py.* What do I hear?
*Ores.* Orestes!
Who, who invokes me thus?
*Py.* Now art thou lost.
*Elec.* Electra 'tis who thus is calling thee;
I am Electra, who, with both my arms,
Thus press thee to my bosom . . .
*Ores.* Where am I?
What said I? . . . Pylades: alas! . . .
*Elec.* Dispel,
Orestes, Pylades, dispel all fear;
I do not feign a name. Orestes, thee,
From thy rapt ecstasy I recognised;
And from my grief, my tears, and my affection,
Acknowledge thou Electra.
*Ores.* Thou dost live?
O sister! . . . thou dost live? and I embrace thee?

*Elec.* Eventful day! . . .
*Ores.* And do I clasp thee thus?
What inexpressible delight I feel!—
Yet O, that bitter sight! my father's tomb? . . .
*Elec.* Be calm a while, I pray thee!
*Py.* O Electra,
How have I sigh'd to know thee! It was thou
That saved'st my Orestes, of myself
The better part; think how I love thee, then!
*Elec.* And thou hast been his guardian friend; to me
Thou art a second brother.
*Py.* Ah! do thou
Join then thy prayers with mine; ah! undertake
With me to check the headlong eagerness
Of that impetuous spirit. To despair,
Orestes, wouldst thou drive us? Ev'ry instant
Wouldst thou that I fear for thee? Hitherto,
Pity, love, vengeance, have conducted us
In safety hither; but if thou art thus
Unguarded . . .
*Ores.* Pardon me, dear Pylades; . . .
I was transported . . . What is now thy wish? . . .
But O! what reason e'er could be controll'd! . . .
What feelings, at a sight so unexpected! . . .—
I saw him, yes, I saw him with these eyes.
His head he lifted from the sable tomb:
His fleshless fingers from his face removed
His grisly locks; coagulated blood
And tears, upon those livid cheeks of death
Stood glist'ning. Obvious to my sight alone
He was not; for upon mine ears there fell
A fearful and a melancholy voice,
Whose tones yet vibrate in my inmost heart:
" O timid son, why dost thou still delay?
" Thou art arrived at manhood, hast assumed
" Thy sword, and yet my murderer still lives?"
O fierce rebuke! . . . He on thy tomb shall fall,
Slain by my hands; his veins shall not retain
A drop within them of his impious blood:
Thou, thirsty shade, shalt drink it all; and soon.
*Elec.* Ah! calm thy rage. I also often see

My father's squalid spectre stalk around
That chilly tomb; and yet I hold my peace.
At ev'ry step, within these palace walls,
Thou wilt behold the impress of his blood;
Yet thou, with dry eyes, wilt be forced to see them,
Till, with fresh blood, they are by thee effaced.—
*Ores.* Electra, how much more than empty words
Would deeds content my heart! But, till the day
For action comes, my anguish I will smother.
Meanwhile, since born to weep, let us at least
Shed tears together. Shall it then be true
What I no longer hoped for? In thy bosom
Shall I shed tears of love, of grief, and anger?
Tidings of thee I long had ceased to hear:
I fear'd that thou hadst been the tyrant's victim:
And rather came prepared as thy avenger,
Than thus to clasp thee to my breast.
*Elec.* I live,
And I embrace thee; this is the first day,
In which I have not quarrell'd with my life.
The impious fury of the vile Ægisthus,
Stung e'en to madness that he could not slay thee,
Convinced me thou wert living: but, alas!
With how much apprehension did I hear
That thou hadst left the hospitable home
Of Strophius! . . .
*Py.* Purposely my father spread
Such a report, that hereby, unassail'd
By treach'ries of Ægisthus, he might live
In greater safety. I, throughout this space,
Ne'er left him, nor will ever leave him.
*Ores.* Death
Alone can part us.
*Py.* No, not even death.
*Elec.* O thou unparallel'd and faithful friend!—
But, now inform me: how will ye appear
Before the cruel and suspicious tyrant?
Here to conceal you were impossible.
*Py.* We will present ourselves as messengers,
Bringing the tidings of Orestes' death.
*Ores.* The means are vile.

*Elec.* Less vile than is Ægisthus.
There is none better or more sure: the thought
Is good. When ye are introduced to him,
'Twill be my care to plan for you the whole;
The time, the place, the mode, the implements
For his destruction. Still I keep, Orestes,
That sword I keep, which in her husband's breast
She plunged, whom we no longer since have dared
To call our mother.
*Ores.* Tell me how she fares,
That impious woman? What life leadeth she?
How does she force thee for the crime not thine
To make atonement, that thou art her daughter?
*Elec.* Thou canst not picture to thyself her life.
All would, and ought to, pity it, except
The children of Atrides . . . And in truth
E'en we must be constrain'd to feel compassion.—
By terror and suspicion always haunted;
E'en by Ægisthus treated with contempt;
Loving Ægisthus, though she knew him guilty;
Repentant, yet p'rhaps capable once more
Her trespass to commit, if the base flame,
At which she is incensed, and blushes, will'd it:
Now wife, now mother; yet ne'er wife or mother:
Remorseless thoughts, by thousands and by thousands,
Distract her heart by day; and horrid phantoms
Scare from her nightly pillow quiet sleep.—
Behold the life she leads.
*Ores.* May Heav'n inflict,
What nature will not suffer us to do,
A terrible and lasting vengeance on her;
But yet to-day she must decide to be
Either a mother or a wife; she must,
When at her side, transfix'd by me, she sees
The vile adult'rer welt'ring in his blood.
*Elec.* Ah, wretched mother! yet thou hast not seen her; . . .
Who knows? . . . perchance, when she is seen by thee . . .
*Ores.* My father I have heard; and that suffices.
*Elec.* Yet such a mingled conflict in thy heart
Wilt thou experience, that, against thy will,

Thou wilt be forced to weep, and recollect
That she's thy mother. She is still towards me
Indulgent; but the infamous Ægisthus,
Who only spares my life to her entreaties,
Much as he can oppresses me. Yet I
Have hitherto endured his cruel gift,
The day expecting, when I might to thee
Restore the sword stain'd with my father's blood.
Although a woman, I have oft been tempted
With my right hand to grasp it: but, at last,
Orestes, thou art come; and come in time;
To-day Ægisthus, from himself to banish
My importuning presence, had decreed
My instant union with an abject slave.

*Ores.* I come unbidden to these impious nuptials:
The gods shall have an unexpected victim.

*Elec.* My mother, but in vain, opposed.

*Ores.* On her,
Say, might we aught depend?

*Elec.* Ah! not at all.
Although 'twixt vice and virtue she may waver,
To vice she still adheres. When at her side
No more she sees Ægisthus,...then,...perchance...
Ah then, would be the time for thee to see her.
She weeps with me, 'tis true; but yet she lives
With the usurper. Do thou shun her presence,
Till he return.

*Py.* Where is the miscreant gone?

*Elec.* Impious, he spends this day in revelry,
The anniversary of Atrides' death.

*Ores.* O rage!

*Elec.* E'en now he's outraging the gods.
Towards Mycæne, in a spot not far
From hence, he offers to the king of hell
Unhallow'd victims and nefarious vows:
It cannot now be long ere he return.—
But let our conf'rence cease: within the palace
Unseen return I: to await Ægisthus
Do you still linger in this outer court.
I to thee, Pylades, commend my brother.
To-day, Orestes, I shall ascertain

Whether or not thou lovest me: I pray thee,
By the remembrance of our murder'd father,
And by our love, be guided by thy friend,
And check the' impetuous ardor of thy nature:
For that revenge, to which we now aspire,
May be by over-eagerness defeated.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA.

*Cly.* Leave me, Electra; go to thy apartments:
I wish to meet Ægisthus . . .
*Elec.* O my mother!
Art thou already troubled by his absence?
And fear'st thou that the thunderbolts of Heaven
To ashes have consumed him, as he stood
Before the altar? Lay aside such fear;
Heav'n hitherto, upon the impious here,
Hath shed perpetual blessings.
*Cly.* Of Ægisthus
Cease thus to speak . . .
*Elec.* 'Tis true; his very name
Blisters the tongue that dares to utter it.
O! art thou she, that wouldst erewhile with me
Bring secretly an off'ring to that tomb
Of tears and vows?
*Cly.* Cease, cease; I must go hence . . .
*Elec.* To meet the man, whom I have often heard,
By thine own lips pronounced the instrument
Of all thy woes?
*Cly.* 'Tis true: I never am
Happy with him: nor am I so without him.
Leave me.
*Elec.* At least, . . . permit me . . .
*Cly.* What wouldst thou?
*Elec.* Ah! . . . should she meet her son before Ægisthus!

## SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Cly.* I seek in vain to cheat my weary thoughts . . .

## SCENE III.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, *and* PYLADES *apart.*

*Ores.* He never will arrive?
*Py.* Where art thou going?
*Cly.* I love Ægisthus, too, too much! . . .
*Ores.* Ægisthus?
Whom do I see? 'tis she: I recollect her.
*Py.* Come here, Orestes; what art doing? stop.
*Cly.* Who thus present themselves before my eyes?
Ah! who art thou?
*Py.* Excuse our hardihood;
Strangers, perchance we have advanced too far:
Ascribe it only to our ignorance.
*Cly.* And who are ye?
*Ores.* In Argos . . .
*Py.* We had not
Our birth . . .
*Ores.* Nor from Ægisthus . . .
*Py.* To the king
The lord of Phocis sends us . . .
*Ores.* If there be
A monarch here . . .
*Py.* From hence, if thou permit,
We will advance within the palace gates,
Seeking Ægisthus.
*Cly.* What cause brings you here?
*Ores.* A lofty one.
*Py.* And to the king would we
Impart it.
*Cly.* Ye may equally to me
Impart it; from the palace now the king
Is absent. . . .
*Py.* But he will return . . .
*Ores.* I hope so.
*Cly.* Meanwhile, to me the whole may be declared.

*Ores.* To thee will I declare it . . .
*Py.* Yes, if thou
Insist upon it; but . . .
*Cly.* Upon the throne
I sit beside Ægisthus.
*Ores.* All men know
That thou art worthy of him.
*Py.* The disclosure
Would be to thee less grateful than to him.
*Cly.* What may it be? . . .
*Ores.* Why shouldst thou fancy this?
What grateful tidings can the husband hear,
Which to his wife were not so?
*Py.* Thou dost know,
That our great lord and master order'd us
To tell it only to Ægisthus' ears.
*Ores.* She and Ægisthus in two bodies are
One soul.
*Cly.* But why thus keep me in suspense?
Speak, speak, without delay.
*Py.* The news to thee
Would be too bitter; and may Heav'n forbid
That we . . .
*Ores.* Thou art mistaken greatly: we
Bring her complete security and peace.
*Cly.* It is your duty now to put an end . . .
*Ores.* O queen, we bring thee tidings of the death . . .
*Cly.* Of whom? . . .
*Py.* Peace, peace.
*Cly.* Of whom? Speak!
*Ores.* . . . Of Orestes.
*Cly.* Alas! what hear I? of my son? . . . O Heavens! . . .
*Ores.* Yes, of the son of Agamemnon slain . . .
*Cly.* What say'st thou?
*Py.* That Orestes was not slain,
He tells thee.
*Ores.* Of the son of him that was . . .
*Py.* Insane and perjured youth, dost thou to me
Thus keep thy promise?
*Cly.* Wretched that I am!
Thus of my only son left destitute . . .

*Ores.* But, after all, it may be that Orestes
Was never the most deadly enemy
Of thy Ægisthus?
*Cly.* Barbarous! Dost thou
Thus to a mother of her only son
The death announce?
*Py.* Yet an unpractised youth,
And ignorant of courts, (ah, pardon him!)
Incautiously, with a superfluous zeal,
He, to content thy wish, has mine betray'd.
Such tidings thou shouldst afterwards have heard,
With management, imparted by Ægisthus,
And only from his lips; such was my project.
But if, through zeal . . .
*Ores.* P'rhaps I have err'd; but now
Thy son is dead, securely with thy consort . . .
*Cly.* Be silent. Ere I was Ægisthus' wife,
I was Orestes' mother.
*Ores.* P'rhaps Ægisthus
Is not so dear to thee as was Orestes?
*Py.* Thou speakest foolishly! What art thou doing?
Dar'st thou embitter thus a mother's pangs
With importuning and officious words?
Leave her; and come with me; time and her tears
Alone can mitigate her grief . . .
*Ores.* Ægisthus
That grief will mitigate.
*Py.* Come: let us cease
Thus to intrude upon her; we have made
Ourselves already too unwelcome to her.
*Cly.* Since in my heart the wound ye have inflicted,
Thou shalt exult in widening that wound,
Hard-hearted youth: ah, tell me now, where, when,
And how my son expired.—Dear, dear Orestes,
All that relates to thee I fain would know;
Nor hear of any thing beside thyself.
*Ores.* Thou, then, yet lov'dst him tenderly?
*Cly.* O youth,
Hast thou no mother?
*Ores.* I? . . . I had.
*Py.* O Heavens!

Lady, thy son succumb'd to fate alone.
His life . . .
*Ores.* Was not cut short by impious foes;
No, to repeated and atrocious treason
He did not fall a victim . . .
*Py.* Be content
With knowing this. Who could address a mother
More circumstantially?
*Cly.* But if a mother
Insist on hearing more . . .
*Py.* Ah, do thou suffer
That the sad story be alone by us
Related fully to the king.
*Ores.* Ægisthus
With joy will hear it.
*Py.* We have said too much:
Let us depart. Now to obey thee, pity
Forbids us.—Follow me: 'tis fitting now,
At length, that, to my will, thou shouldst submit.

## Scene IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Cly.* Ah, my unhappy son! . . . thou guiltless son
Of an abandon'd mother! . . . Ah, Orestes! . . .
Thou art no more! From thy paternal realm
Banish'd by me, thou diest? Sick, deserted,
And by what death, who knows? . . . And at thy side,
In thy last agonies, thou hadst no friend? . . .
No ritual honors did thy tomb receive . . .
A fugitive, unknown, and unassisted,
O what a fate for great Atrides' son! . . .
No mother, and no sister, with their tears,
Embalm'd thy livid corpse! . . . Belovèd son,
Thy mother's hands perform'd not the last office,
Closed not thy dying eyes.—But what say I?
Were these hands fit for such a function? Still
Impure, and reeking with thy father's blood,
Thou from thy face, Orestes, and with reason,
Wouldest assuredly have thrust them back.
O thou, deserving a less barbarous mother! . . .—

But I, for having sacrificed thy father,
Say, am I less thy mother? Never, never
Are nature's rights annull'd . . . Yet, had not fate
In youth cut short thy life, thou wouldst perchance,
(As a vain oracle predicted once)
Have turn'd thy sword against thy mother's breast? . . .
Thy duty 'twas: what other hand so well
Could punish my irreparable fault?
Ah! live, Orestes; come; return to Argos,
Fulfil the oracle; in me, no mother,
But a vile woman, who usurp'd the name,
Wilt thou destroy: ah, come! . . . But thou'rt no more . . .

## SCENE V.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ægis.* What mean those groans? what new-born cause of grief? . . .

*Cly.* Yes, now exult; in tears, eternal tears,
I have fresh cause of grief: now, cease to stand
In tremulous and mute astonishment.
At last, for once thy wishes all are granted;
That fierce, that terrible, that cruel foe,
That foe who never injured thee, is slain.
My only son, alas! no longer breathes.

*Ægis.* What dost thou say? Orestes? Is he dead?
Whence hadst thou the intelligence? who brought it? . . .
I do not think it true.

*Cly.* Not think it true?
No, no; improbable thou judgest it,
Since he so often has escaped thy sword?
But if thou'rt not persuaded by my tears,
My fury may convince thee. Even now,
All, all my unextinguish'd love returns
To my maternal heart.

*Ægis.* Canst thou adduce
No other proof? . . .

*Cly.* Proofs thou shalt have enough
To satisfy that wicked heart of thine.
Yes, word by word, Ægisthus, thou shalt hear
The dreadful story told; and at each word

Thy soul will brighten with Thyestean joy.
Strangers there are in Argos, competent
To satiate thy inhuman appetite.
*Ægis.* Have strangers ventured to appear in Argos
Without my knowledge? Why was their arrival
Not first to me announced?
*Cly.* Does it afflict thee
That thou wert not the first within my breast
To plunge the dagger? Such a pious deed
Belong'd especially to thee: Ægisthus
Should to a wife and mother, and none else,
Such grateful tidings bring.
*Ægis.* What thus excites,
Woman, thy sudden anger? Didst thou love
So fondly thy dead son, who, when alive,
Thou scarcely recollectedst?
*Cly.* What say'st thou?
Never did I, no never, cease to be
The mother of Orestes: and sometimes
If I a mother's love conceal'd, to this
Maternal love impell'd me. I suppress'd
Much of the fondness that my heart conceived,
Towards my son, only that he might be
The less exposed to thy clandestine snares.
Now that he is no more, no more I feign;
Know that Orestes was, and ever will be,
Dearer to me than thou . . .
*Ægis.* Thou sayest little.
Yet I was dearer to thee than thy fame . . .
*Cly.* The fame of her who is to thee espoused
Should not be spoken of. I gave to thee
My fame, my husband, and my bosom's peace,
And of my only and belovèd son
The all I gave to thee, except his life.
But thou, impell'd by horrible revenge,
And a corrupt ambition of the throne,
Whate'er I gave to thee, didst deem a nothing,
While aught remain'd to take. Who ever saw
A heart at once so cruel and so false?
To thy nefarious, ill-feign'd tenderness,
Which I believed in a disastrous hour,

Tell me, ah tell me, was the child Orestes
Ever an obstacle? Yet scarce the pulse
Of dying Agamemnon ceased to beat,
Ere thou didst openly, with threat'ning voice,
Demand Orestes' life. Thou, frantically,
Exploredst all the palace: then that sword,
Which thou dar'dst never, with thy coward arm,
Plunge in the father, bravely thou didst brandish;
Thou wert a hero 'gainst a pow'rless infant.
He from thy fury was withdrawn: that day
Fully I knew thee; but, alas! too late.
Unhappy son! what did it then avail
That from thy father's murd'rer thou wert rescued?
A death untimely in a foreign land
Awaited thee . . . Ah, thou hast kill'd my son,
Ægisthus, thou detestable usurper!
Ah, pardon me, Ægisthus . . . pardon me; . . .
I was a mother; . . . and am now no longer . . .

*Ægis.* Provided that Orestes be no more,
Thou mayst indulge in tears and execrations.
Tell me: to whom these messengers first spoke?
Who are they? where did they first land? who sent them?
Where lodge they? are they heralds from a king?
Why, ere elsewhere their business they told,
Did they not ask in Argos for Ægisthus?

*Cly.* For thee they ask'd: 'twas Strophius sent them here:
Unlucky fortune threw them in my way;
All I would hear, in spite of their reluctance.
Two, but unlike in character, the men
Are in thy palace now. The one refused,
Compassionate and cautious, to disclose
To me the bitter tidings; but the other,
Impetuous, fervid, and ferocious, seem'd
To triumph in my grief: he no less joy
Will feel in telling, than in hearing, thou,
The melancholy tale.

*Ægis.* But, why to me
Should Strophius now expressly send such news?
He always was the vassal of Atrides;

This all men know. Did not this very Strophius
Shelter thy son? And did he not accord
To him a refuge in his court?
*Cly.* 'Tis true,
He did at first; but now for many years
He has from thence been absent; since that time
Of him we heard no more.
*Ægis.* Fame spake of him;
But who can know the truth? Yet 'tis most certain
That from his earliest years he did possess,
As an inseparable guide, and guard,
Defender, and best friend, the son of Strophius;
That Pylades of his, whom I abhor.
In short, this Strophius ever was my foe:
Whence has he changed? . . .
*Cly.* Dost thou not know, by proof,
Now that thou'rt made a king, what constitutes
A monarch's heart?—Barbarian! p'rhaps to thee
'Tis grateful thus to hear me now assert
That which costs me so much? Go, thou hast heard
Sufficient for thy purpose; go, and leave me.—
Strophius conducive to his int'rests deem'd
Orestes; hence withdrew him from thy power;
Hence welcomed him, and loved him royally;
Hence banish'd him, when useless he became,
Or detrimental; hence he sends to thee
A prompt ambassador to tell his death.—
Thou in this fashion once thyself didst love me,
Before I slew my husband, and his kingdom
Gave thee; so next thou hatedst me; so now
Thou dost despise me. Thus are mutable
In monarchs, virtue, honor, faith, and love,
Changing with ev'ry tide of chance and fortune.
*Ægis.* Remember that I left to thee the choice
Between the sons of Atreus and Thyestes:
Thou mad'st the choice. Why then, by endless taunts,
Constrain me to atone for thy own deed?
As much as thou deservest it, I love thee.
*Cly.* —Ægisthus, to my importuning taunts
I put an end. Despise me, if thou canst;

But never dare to tell me that thou dost so.
If to a wicked crime love drove me, think
To what that love when scorn'd, remorse, revenge,
And grief, may drive a woman in despair.

### Scene VI.

ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* Let women but be heard: nought else they care for.

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## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

*Py.* The moment has arrived: we cannot now,
E'en if we would, recede: thou know'st that we
Are summon'd by Ægisthus to his presence;
To us, commanded here to wait for him,
Forthwith he comes: and if thy manners change not,
We also come here to be kill'd, not kill.
I say no more. Be frantic as thou wilt;
I am prepared for death, as well as vengeance.

*Ores.* Alas! I know that I deserve too well
Rebukes like these: thou lovest me too much;
I was not worthy of a friend like thee;
Ah! pardon me. I will restrain myself
Before Ægisthus; that will be, I hope,
Easier to me, than to restrain myself
Before that woman, who appears to me
To have her face, her robe, and both her hands
Discolor'd still with blood. Yes, better far
The hatred I can master, which I bear
Towards a foe, than that commingled conflict
Of pity and of wrath, which at the sight
Of such a mother throbb'd in ev'ry vein.

*Py.* Who will'd thee to encounter such a conflict?
Not I.

*Ores.* An impulse undefinable,
Yet stronger than myself. Wouldst thou believe it?
At first the thought arose within my mind
To slay her on the spot; in swift succession,
And fierce as rapid, a new wish assail'd me
To clasp her in my arms: and afterwards
Both impulses in turn.—Sad sight! O state
As inexpressible as it was fearful! . . .
*Py.* Peace, peace. Ægisthus comes.
*Ores.* What do I see?
And with him also comes my mother? . . .
*Py.* Now
Do thou be silent, or destroy me.

## Scene II.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, SOLDIERS.

*Ægis.* Come,
Come, O my consort; thou may'st once more hear
Tidings, which even yet I scarce believe.
*Cly.* Barbarian, dost thou force me to this torture?
*Ægis.* Let us examine.—Strangers, then to me
The king of Phocis hath deputed you
As trusty messengers?
*Py.* E'en so.
*Ægis.* Do ye
Bring certain news?
*Py.* My lord, a monarch sent us;
We to a monarch speak: can there exist
Suspicion of imposture?
*Ægis.* But your Strophius
Till now ne'er gave me pledge of amity.
*Py.* This then will be the first. I'll not deny
That he already many years ago
Had other sentiments: he felt compassion
For the unfriended fortunes of Orestes;
But yet, if once he granted him a refuge,
He always strenuously to him denied
Arms and assistance; and against thyself
Strophius would ne'er wage war.

*Ægis.* P'rhaps openly
He dared not wage it. But of this enough.
Where did he perish?
*Ores.* He!
*Py.* The Cretan soil
Gives him a tomb.
*Ægis.* And how, before I knew it,
Was his death known to Strophius?
*Py.* Pylades
The news bore quickly to his father: he
Was present at the sad catastrophe.
*Ægis.* To him a destiny so premature
What there occasion'd?
*Py.* His too youthful ardor.
Ev'ry fifth year, in Crete, by ancient usage,
Renews commemorative games and rites
Of festal sacrifice to highest Jove.
Desire of fame, and natural love of pleasure,
Drew to that shore Orestes: by his side
His Pylades inseparably stood.
A warm desire for honor prompted him,
On a light car, within the wide arena,
To seek the noble palm of rapid coursers:
Too much intent on triumph, there he lost,
By gaining it, his life.
*Ægis.* But how? Relate.
*Py.* Too fierce, impatient, and incautious too,
Now with a threat'ning cry he press'd them forward,
Now with a whip, which, stain'd with blood, he whirl'd,
So furiously he lash'd his ill-tamed steeds,
(Which, in proportion as they were more swift,
Became more wild) that past the goal they flew.
Deaf to the reins, and deaf to all the cries,
With which he vainly sought to quiet them,
Their nostrils breathed out fire; and to the air
Waved in wild masses their luxuriant manes;
In a thick cloud of dust involved, career'd they
Like lightning flashes round the circus vast.
The tortuous whirlings of the chariot brought
Discomfiture, fear, death, on ev'ry side:
Until the fervid axle being driven

With fearful shock against a marble column,
Orestes fell o'erthrown.
*Cly.* Ah! say no more:
A mother hears thy words.
*Py.* True; pardon me.—
I will not tell thee how, dragg'd by the reins,
He stain'd the ground with blood . . . To his assistance
Ran Pylades; . . . in vain; . . . his friend expired
Within his arms.
*Cly.* O luckless cruel death! . . .
*Py.* All wept for him in Crete; such was his grace,
His beauty, and his courage . . .
*Cly.* Tears, alas!
Who would not shed for him, except alone
This infamous usurper? . . . Much-loved son,
Must I no more behold thee; never more? . . .
But ah! too plainly do I see thee pass
The waves of Styx, and clasp thy father's shade;
Too plainly see you both direct towards me
The angry look, and burn with horrid rage . . .
Yes, honor'd shades, 'tis I, and I alone,
That am your murderer . . . Inhuman mother!
Consort most guilty!—Now, Ægisthus, now,
Art thou not satisfied?
*Ægis.* —Thy narrative
Has certainly the character of truth;
That truth will soon be ascertain'd. Meanwhile
Remain within my palace; a reward,
Such as is fitting, ere ye hence depart,
Ye shall receive.
*Py.* Yes; here will we remain
At thy command.—Come, come.
*Ores.* Let us depart,
Let us depart; for now I can no more
Refrain from speech.
*Cly.* O thou, who dost relate
The sad event, and not exult with joy,
Ah, stay awhile thy footsteps; and inform me:
Why thou hast not to his sad mother brought
The sacred dust of her belovèd son
In a funereal urn? A tragical,

Yet welcome gift! to which I have a claim
Before all others.
*Py.* Pylades perform'd
His obsequies; from the funereal rites
Excluding ev'ry one, himself alone
His dust collected, and with tears embalm'd it:
This sad, and last commemorative pledge
Of the most noble, true, and holy friendship
The world e'er saw, he for himself reserves:
And who would seek to rob him of his treasure?
*Ægis.* Who would e'en seek to ask him for his treasure?
Let him possess it: yet a friend so matchless
Claim'd a more signal token of regard.
I am astonish'd, that, with the sad corpse,
To prove the full devotion of his soul,
He did not burn himself upon the pyre;
And that one tomb did not contain the relics
Of so sublime, unparagon'd a pair.
*Ores.* O rage! must I be silent?
*Py.* It is true,
The grief of Pylades caused not his death;
Perchance, his pious fondness for his father
Induced him, though reluctantly, to live.
Ofttimes the test of courage it becomes
Rather to live than die.
*Ægis.* This Pylades
Detesteth me as much as did Orestes.
*Py.* We are his father's messengers: he wishes
With Argos to renew a strict alliance.
*Ægis.* But he's the sire of Pylades: 'twas he
Who, as a very son, received Orestes;
Defended him, from my revenge withdrew him.
*Py.* But since he's dead, is not thy rage diminish'd?
*Cly.* What was Orestes' crime?
*Ores.* That he was son
Of Agamemnon.
*Ægis.* How dost thou presume? . . .
*Py.* My lord, . . . where doth not fame spread deeds like these?
How much Atrides held thee in abhorrence,
All Greece knows well; and that against thy life

Snares he contrived; that thou wert thence constrain'd
To watch his son . . .
*Ores.* And that thou hast endeavor'd,
A thousand and a thousand times, to draw him
To an opprobrious death, all Greece well knows;
It also knows, that merely at his presence
Thou wouldst have trembled . . .
*Ægis.* What is this thou sayest?
Who art thou? Speak.
*Ores.* I am . . .
*Py.* He is . . . alas!
Ægisthus, check thy rage; . . . he is . . .
*Ægis.* Who is he?
*Ores.* I am . . .
*Py.* The son of Strophius . . . Pylades;
Nought hath induced him thus to come to Argos,
But a desire to contemplate the spot
That gave Orestes birth. He hither comes
To weep with his friend's mother. To my care
Strophius committed him; to cause in thee
The less suspicion, in a humble bark
He came, and laid aside all royal pomp.
He, when he heard Orestes' name pronounced,
Could not be silent: thus I've told thee all.
Do not thou deem him criminal, O king,
From ill-consider'd words; do not suspect
That aught, but what I've told thee, brought him hither.
*Cly.* O Heav'ns! And is this Pylades? O come!
My own new son; . . . and let me hear from thee . . .
*Ægis.* Thy fond protection, queen, avails him not.—
Whoe'er he be, I am not bound to suffer
Such haughty words . . . But what? thy ardent look,
Inflamed with vengeance, thou dost fix on me?
And why dost thou irresolutely bend
Thine eyes upon the ground? To me ye were not
By Strophius sent as messengers; ah, no;
Ye lie, and ye are traitors. Guards, in chains
Bind them this instant . . .
*Py.* Hear me, I beseech thee . . .
And canst thou, from a vague suspicion, thus
The rights of hospitality defy?

*Ægis.* Suspicion? Fraud is graven in thy face,
And apprehension.
*Ores.* In thy guilty heart
They are engraved.
*Cly.* Ah! tell me: p'rhaps the news
May not be true? . . .
*Py.* Too true, alas! . . .
*Ores.* Already
Tremblest thou, lest Orestes should revive,
My own new mother?
*Ægis.* What audacity!
Some dreadful secret is conceal'd beneath
These words of thine. Ere thou receivest for them
The punishment thou meritest . . .
*Py.* O Heav'ns!
Ah, hear me!
*Ægis.* I will know the truth. Meanwhile
Bind them with fetters in a cruel dungeon . . .
Ah! there can be no doubt; these impious miscreants
Are creatures of Orestes.—Guards, for them
Prepare the bitt'rest torments: I myself
Will strictly question them; and from their lips
Learn their designs. Now go. I'll soon discover
Whether Orestes be alive or dead.

## Scene III.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS.

*Elec.* Orestes dragg'd to death? What do I see!
O mother, suffer'st thou thy only son
Thus to be hurried off to death?
*Cly.* My son? . . .
*Ægis.* Orestes? In my pow'r? In Argos? yonder?
Orestes? Unexpected joy! Ye guards . . .
*Cly.* My son!
*Elec.* Alas! what have I said?
*Ægis.* Quick, run;
Bring back those youths directly to my presence;
Make haste; fly, fly. O joy!
*Elec.* And I've betray'd him!

*Cly.* My son!—If first thou do not murder me,
Fear, monster, fear . . .
*Ægis.* In Argos, in my palace,
Perfidious woman, dost thou introduce,
And thus conceal, my mortal enemy?
*Elec.* They were unknown to her, as well as thee:
Mine was the stratagem.
*Ægis.* The punishment
Shall fall on both.
*Cly.* No; take my life alone;
But spare my children . . .
*Ægis.* What, the vile remains
Of thy Atrides? From excess of joy
Scarce can my breast contain my swelling heart.
One blow to-day exterminates them all . . .
But see, the traitors have return'd: behold them.
O most propitious day!

## Scene IV.

ORESTES *and* PYLADES *chained;* ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, SOLDIERS.

*Ægis.* All, all I know;
Excepting which of you may be Orestes:
Confess . . .
*Py.* I am.
*Ores.* 'Tis false: I am Orestes.
*Cly.* Which of you is my son? This instant speak:
I am to him a shield.
*Ægis.* Speak thou, Electra;
And take heed not to lie; which is thy brother?
*Elec.* 'Tis he;[1] 'tis he, too certainly!
*Py.* I am . . .
*Ores.* Believe him not.
*Py.* Since the projected plot
Is thus discover'd, let none clothe himself
With my avenging fury.
*Ores.* If thou dare,
Look on my eyes, Ægisthus, and behold

[1] Running towards Pylades.

The fury that burns there; look, and confess,
I am no other than Atrides' son:
Believe this from the terror that my voice,
My voice alone, strikes on thy coward heart.
*Ægis.* Coward thou art; coward, and traitor too;
And by my hands shalt die.
*Cly.* Or sheathe thy sword,
Or plunge it in my breast; except through me,
Tyrant, thou canst not touch them. Stop ... O Heavens! ...
Do thou to me reveal thyself, Orestes.
Ah, yes; thou, thou art he.
*Ores.* Go; and elsewhere
Stretch thy ensanguined hands. If we are doom'd
To yield our lives, each of us is Orestes:
If to embrace a mother like thyself,
Neither is then thy son.
*Cly.* O bitter words! ...
Yet, ... no, I'll leave thee not.
*Ægis.* See what reward
Awaits thy love insane.—Orestes, yes,
I know thee by thy filial piety.
Of thee, and of thy execrable race,
Thy words are worthy.
*Py.* Can he silently,
Who is not born from her, endure to hear
A parricidal mother call him son?
*Ores.* Peace, peace ...
*Elec.* Ægisthus, art thou not convinced?
This one is Pylades; he only lies
To save his friend ...
*Ægis.* To save his friend? And which
Of you, which shall be saved?
*Ores.* Ah! if my hands
Were not with fetters bound, by certain proof
Thou hadst now seen if I Orestes am;
But, since I cannot with those hands tear out
Thy miscreant heart, let this attesting sword
Persuade thee who I am.
*Py.* Alas! O Heavens!
Put up that sword.

*Ores.* Ægisthus, dost thou see
This sword that I conceal'd for thy destruction?
Woman, thou know'st this sword? Thy impious hand
Planted this weapon in my father's breast.
*Cly.* That is Atrides' voice, his looks, his wrath.
Ah, thou art he! If thou wilt not permit
That I embrace thee, in my bosom plunge
That weapon thou; thus in me for thy father
Thou wilt obtain a more consummate vengeance.
While I exist, there is no violence
That ever from thy side can sever me.
In thy defence, or by thy hand I'll die.
O son! . . . I am a mother yet: and love thee . . .
Ah! come to my embrace . . .
*Ægis.* Away. What dost thou? . . .
A son and parricide? . . . Ho, guards! be quick:
Tear from his hand the sword . . .
*Ores.* My sword to thee,
Whom I will call my mother, I resign:
Behold it; take it: thou know'st how to use it;
Plunge it, ah, plunge it in Ægisthus' heart.
Leave me to die; I shall die satisfied,
If to my father I secure revenge:
No other proof of thy maternal love
Would I from thee receive: kill him this instant.
Ah! what is this? Thou tremblest? thou art pale?
Thou weepest? from thy hand the weapon falls?
Lov'st thou Ægisthus? Lov'st him, and art thou
The mother of Orestes? Cursèd sight!
Let me no more behold thee: go.
*Cly.* Alas! . . .
I die! . . .
*Ægis.* This is,[1] this is (and it belongs
To me alone) the sword that slew the father;
And it shall slay the son. I know it well;
'Twas mine of yore, when stain'd with other blood;
And to herself I formerly consign'd it.—
But p'rhaps, O youthful hero, thou art not
Fully apprised of all the deaths inflicted

[1] Taking up the sword, which had fallen at the feet of Clytemnestra,

By this redoubted blade. Thy impious grandsire,
Atreus, first bathed it in my brothers' blood,
Sons of his brother, of Thyestes. I
Nought else of my paternal heritage
Received: in this were all my hopes reposed;
And not in vain reposed. Whate'er remains
Of the abominable race, all, all,
I hold within my pow'r. I knew thee well,
From the desire I felt to murder thee.—
But ah! can death, e'en in its direst forms,
With that unnatural banquet be compared
To which thy cruel grandsire bade my father?

*Cly.* Death to my son? thou shalt have death the first.

*Ægis.* To me thou'rt known; thou also for thyself
Tremble, O woman, if thou . . . From my side
Attempt not to depart.

*Cly.* In vain.

*Ægis.* Ah, tremble.

*Elec.* Appease thy thirst, Ægisthus, in my blood:
I also am the offspring of Atrides.
Behold me at thy feet . . .

*Ores.* What dost thou, sister?

*Py.* Mine was the stratagem; like them I had not
A father to avenge; and yet I came,
Yes, thee I came to kill: thy cruelty
In me thou may'st securely satiate now.
But without risk thou canst not shed in Argos
The life-blood of Orestes . . .

*Ægis.* Pylades,
Electra, and Orestes, all shall die:
And thou too, woman, if thou do not calm
Thy rage.

*Ores.* Me, only me. What canst thou gain
By sentencing to death a helpless maiden?
Son of a mighty king is Pylades;
And from his death great evil may result
To thee: kill me, and me alone.—O ye,
The best part of myself, my friends, I feel
For you indeed my soul alive to grief:
My rash impetuosity hath slain you:

O Heav'ns! nought else afflicts me. But to see
And hear Ægisthus, and restrain myself,
Was for a soul like mine impossible . . .
So much ye've done to save me; and I kill you!
*Ægis.* O joy! a greater punishment than death
Can I then give thee? Slain before thine eyes
Electra first, then Pylades shall fall;
He then fall on them.
*Cly.* Infamous . . .
*Elec.* O mother,
Thus dost thou let him slaughter us?
*Py.* Orestes!
*Ores.* O Heav'ns! . . . I weep? Ah! yes; I weep for you.—
Thou, woman, once so bold in guilt, art thou
In reparation so infirm?
*Cly.* O son! . . .
Were it but possible to free myself
From out his impious hands!
*Ægis.* Perfidious woman!
Thou shalt not so escape from my control.—
I now am weary of this waste of words:
Cease, cease to speak. Why should we more delay
To drag them to their death? Go.—Recollect,
Dimas, thy life is of their death the pledge.

### Scene V.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ægis.* Come with me, woman.—Now at last, Thyestes,
We do obtain a full, though tardy vengeance.

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## ACT V.

### Scene I.

ÆGISTHUS, SOLDIERS.

*Ægis.* O unexpected treachery! O madness!
Orestes freed? We now shall see.

## SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS.

*Cly.* Alas!
Return: fly back with speed.
*Ægis.* Ah, impious woman!
Dost thou, too, rush to arms?
*Cly.* I would preserve thee:
Ah! hear me; I am not . . .
*Ægis.* Perfidious . . .
*Cly.* Stop.
*Ægis.* Didst thou, then, promise to surrender me
Alive to that vile traitor?
*Cly.* Nay, I swear
From him to rescue thee, although I perish.
Ah, here remain; conceal thyself, I pray;
Meanwhile I am thy rampart 'gainst his rage.
*Ægis.* Arms 'gainst that rage will be a better rampart.
Go; leave me. I haste thither . . .
*Cly.* Where?
*Ægis.* To kill him.
*Cly.* Thou go'st to death. Alas! what art thou doing?
Dost thou not hear the cries and menaces
Of all the people? Stay; I will not leave thee.
*Ægis.* In vain thou wishest from thy impious son
To ward the death-blow. Quit my side, be silent,
Leave me, or I . . .
*Cly.* Do thou, Ægisthus, now
Destroy me, if thou canst not trust to me.
"Orestes!" Hear'st thou? How they shout: "Orestes!"
How all around us that terrific name
Sounds like a blast of death? Ah! I am now
No more a mother, if thou art in danger:
'Gainst my own blood my heart once more is harden'd.
*Ægis.* Thou know'st thy sight is hateful to the Argives:
And if thou now wouldst show thyself to them,
Their rage thou wouldst redouble. But the shout
Increases. Ah! thou wert the cause of this,
Vile woman: vengeance I delay'd for thee,
Which now reverts on me.
*Cly.* Ah! kill me then.

*Ægis.* I will find safety by some other means.
*Cly.* I follow thee.
*Ægis.* Ill wilt thou be my shield;
Leave me: depart: whatever the event,
Thy presence importunes me. Hence, away.

## Scene III.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Cly.* All, all renounce me! . . . Agonizing state!
My son no longer owns me for his mother;
Nor, for his wife, my husband: yet I am
A mother and a wife. Ah, wretched creature!
I will at distance follow him, nor lose
The traces of his steps.

## Scene IV.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Elec.* Where go'st thou, mother?
Within the palace walls do thou return:
Danger most imminent . . .
*Cly.* Where is Orestes?
What is he doing? Tell me.
*Elec.* Pylades,
Orestes and myself are all in safety.
Ægisthus' satellites themselves were moved.
"This is Orestes," Dimas first exclaim'd;
Then all the people: "Let Orestes live;
"And let Ægisthus die!"
*Cly.* What do I hear!
*Elec.* Mother, be calm; thou quickly wilt behold
Thy son once more; and with the tyrant's spoils . . .
*Cly.* Ah, cruel! Leave me; hence I fly . . .
*Elec.* No, no;
Remain: the people shudder; and proclaim
Thee, with loud voice, a parricidal wife.
Be not at present visible; avoid
The great and instant peril that awaits thee:
On this account I came. In seeing us
Dragg'd on to death, in thee a mother's grief,

All, all was evident: now thou hast made
Atonement for thy fault. To thee my brother
Dispatch'd me urgently, to aid, to soothe thee,
And to withdraw thee from the dreadful sight.
Himself and Pylades, in arms, meanwhile,
In ev'ry quarter swiftly run to seek
Ægisthus. Where is he? ... The miscreant ... Where? ...
*Cly.* The miscreant is Orestes.
*Elec.* What say'st thou?
O Heav'ns! What do I hear?
*Cly.* I run to save him
Or with him to expire.
*Elec.* Thou shalt not go,
Mother. The people threaten ...
*Cly.* Punishment
To me is due; and I will go there ...
*Elec.* Stop.
The wretch that erewhile dragg'd to death thy children,
O mother, canst thou? ...
*Cly.* Yes, myself will save him.
Check not my footsteps: I am overruled
By my accursèd fate. He is my husband;
Too much I've lost for him; I will not lose him,
Nor can I lose him. Traitors, not my children,
You I abhor: I go to him: now leave me,
Vile one; at all risks will I go to him:
Ah! may I only there arrive in time!

## SCENE V.

ELECTRA.

*Elec.* Go, if thou wilt then, to thy destiny ...
Ah! yet I hope that she may be too late.—
Why cannot I my right hand with a sword
Arm also, with a thousand blows to pierce
The bosom of the infamous Ægisthus!
O blinded mother! how art thou possess'd
By that unworthy wretch!—But, yet ... I tremble; ...
If now the angry people should on her
Take vengeance for their king? ... Let me pursue her.—
But who comes hither? Pylades! and with him
My brother is not?

## Scene VI.

PYLADES, ELECTRA.

*Elec.* Tell me: ah! Orestes?...

*Py.* The palace he surrounds with arms: our prey
Is now secure. Where is Ægisthus hidden?
Hast thou seen him?

*Elec.* I saw, and I restrain'd
In vain his frantic consort: through yon door
She darted; saying that herself would be
Ægisthus' shield. He thence was gone before
From out the palace.

*Py.* May he then have dared
To go to meet the Argives? At this hour
He is no more: happy who smote him first!—
But hark! more near and louder do I hear
The people's cries.

*Elec.* "Orestes!" Ah! I hope...

*Py.* Behold, he comes in all his burning fury.

## Scene VII.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, FOLLOWERS OF ORESTES AND PYLADES.

*Ores.* Let none of you now venture in my cause
To slay Ægisthus: I, and I alone,
Possess the weapon destined to that deed.—
Ægisthus, where art thou, thou recreant coward?
Ægisthus, where art thou? A voice of death
Calls thee: where art thou?... Dost thou not come forth?
Ah vile! dost hide thyself? In vain; to thee
Not e'en the centre of deep Erebus
Shall be a refuge. Thou shalt quickly see
If I'm in very truth Atrides' son.

*Elec.* ..., He ... is not here.

*Ores.* Traitors! ye, ye perchance
Have struck him down without me?

*Py.* Ere I came
He from the palace fled.

*Ores.* He hides himself
Within the palace: I will hale him thence.—
Here shall my hand by thy soft tresses drag thee:

There are no prayers, or pow'rs of Heav'n or hell,
That can from me release thee. I will make thee
With thy abhorrèd carcass plough the dust
E'en to my father's tomb: there will I drag thee,
And from thy veins, e'en to the latest drop,
Drain thy adult'rous life-blood.
*Elec.* Dost thou not
Believe me, brother? not believe Electra? . . .
*Ores.* And who art thou? I sought Ægisthus here.
*Py.* He flies.
*Ores.* He flies? and ye, vile, stand ye here?
Soon will I find him.

## Scene VIII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, PYLADES, ORESTES, FOLLOWERS OF ORESTES AND PYLADES.

*Cly.* Son, have pity.
*Ores.* Pity? . . .
Whose son am I? I am Atrides' son.
*Cly.* Ægisthus is already bound with fetters.
*Ores.* Does he yet breathe? O joy! I go to slay him.
*Cly.* O pause! 'Twas only I that kill'd thy father;
Rather kill me: . . . Ægisthus of that crime
Was never guilty.
*Ores.* Who, who clasps my arm?
Who would detain me thus? O rage! Ægisthus . . .
I see him; hither dragg'd he comes; . . . unloose me . . .
*Cly.* Orestes, know'st thou not thy mother?
*Ores.* Die,
Ægisthus!—Miscreant, perish!—by the hand
Now of Orestes die!

## Scene IX.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, PYLADES, FOLLOWERS OF PYLADES.

*Cly.* Alas! he flies me! . . .
Thou shalt destroy me first.

## Scene X.

ELECTRA, PYLADES, FOLLOWERS OF PYLADES.

*Elec.* Run, Pylades;
Fly, bring her back; constrain her to return.

## Scene XI.

ELECTRA.

*Elec.* Alas! I tremble . . . She is still my mother:
I ought to pity her.—But did not she
Behold her children erewhile on the brink
Of an opprobrious death; and did she shew,
In their behalf, the courage and the grief
That now she feels for him?—At length the day,
The wish'd-for day, is come. At length, O tyrant,
Thou fall'st a bloody victim.—Once again
I hear the palace walls resound with screams,
As on that horrible ensanguined night,
In which my father lay a murder'd corpse,
I heard it some time echo.—Even now
Orestes' hand hath dealt the mortal blow.
Ægisthus falls; the people's loud acclaim
His death announces: lo! Orestes comes
Triumphant: and his right hand grasps a sword
Reeking with blood.

## Scene XII.

ELECTRA, ORESTES.

*Elec.* O come, my brother, come;
Noble avenger of the king of kings,
Avenger of my father, and of Argos;
Come to my breast . . .
*Ores.* My sister, . . . see me now
The worthy son of Agamemnon. See;
This is Ægisthus' blood. Scarce I beheld him,
Ere I sprang forward to destroy him there;
Nor did I recollect that I had threaten'd
To drag his body to my father's tomb.
Within that trembling and effeminate heart
I plunged and plunged full seven times my sword:—
Yet have I not appeased my ardent thirst.
*Elec.* Then Clytemnestra to arrest thy arm
Came not in time.
*Ores.* Who could accomplish that?
Arrest my arm? I leap'd upon Ægisthus;

The lightning is not swifter in its course.
The coward wept, and his disgraceful tears
Fill'd me with greater rage. My father! ah,
A man that dared not die could murder thee?
*Elec.* My father is avenged; now calm thy spirits;
And tell me: as thou hither cam'st, didst thou
Not meet with Pylades?
*Ores.* I saw Ægisthus,
None else.—Where is beloved Pylades?
How came it that he did not second me
In such an enterprise?
*Elec.* To him, erewhile,
My mad, despairing mother I confided.
*Ores.* Of them I nothing saw.
*Elec.* See, he returns; . . .
O Heav'ns! what see I? He returns alone?
*Ores.* And sad?

## Scene XIII.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA.

*Ores.* O wherefore sad, my better part,
Art thou? Dost thou not know that I have kill'd,
I, that usurper? See; my weapon still
Is reeking with his blood. Ah! thou with me
The triumph hast not shared! Do thou then feast
Thine eyes upon this spectacle.
*Py.* O sight!—
Orestes, give to me that sword.
*Ores.* For what?
*Py.* Give it to me.
*Ores.* Then take it.
*Py.* Hear me.—Now
It is no longer lawful in this land
For us to tarry: come . . .
*Ores.* But what? . . .
*Elec.* Ah! speak:
Say where is Clytemnestra?
*Ores.* Name her not:
Perchance she now constructs the funeral pile
For her flagitious husband.

*Py.* More, far more,
Thou now hast perfected than thy revenge:
Now come; ask nothing further . . .
*Ores.* O! what say'st thou?...
*Elec.* My mother, Pylades, I ask of thee.—
Ah! through my veins what death-like chillness shoots!
*Py.* The gods . . .
*Elec.* Ah! dead perchance? . . .
*Ores.* Against herself
Infuriate has she turn'd her sword? . . .
*Elec.* —Alas!
O Pylades! . . . thou answerest not?
*Ores.* Relate;
What has occurr'd?
*Py.* Transfix'd . . .
*Ores.* By whom?
*Py.* —Ah! come..
*Elec.* Thou killed'st her.
*Ores.* What! I a parricide? . . .
*Py.* The sword thou unawares in her didst plunge,
Blinded by rage, against Ægisthus rushing . . .
*Ores.* What sudden horror seizes me! Am I
A parricide?—That sword, O Pylades,
Give me: once more . . .
*Py.* It shall not be.
*Elec.* My brother . . .
*Py.* Wretched Orestes!
*Ores.* Who now calls me brother?
Thou, impious woman, p'rhaps, who hast to life
Preserved me, and the murder of my mother?—
Restore my sword, my sword, I say; . . . O rage!—
What have I done? . . . Where am I? Who restrains me? . . .
Who thus pursues me? . . . Whither shall I fly? . . .
Where shall I hide myself?—O father, why
Thus fiercely glare? Of me thou asked'st blood:
Here, here is blood; . . . for thee alone I shed it.
*Elec.* Orestes, dear Orestes . . . Wretched brother! . . .
No more he hears; . . . his sense is gone . . . We ever,
Dear Pylades, will stand beside him.
*Py.* Cruel
Inevitable law of dreadful fate!

VII.

# ROSMUNDA.

## THE ARGUMENT.

Rosmunda (or Rosamond) was daughter of Comundus (or Cunimund), king of the Gepidæ, and married Alboïno (or Alboin), king of the Lombards, after he had vanquished her father, who fell in battle, A.D. 566. In accordance with the barbarous custom of the age, Alboïno turned the skull of Comundus into a drinking-cup (which Gibbon mentions to have been preserved for 200 years among the Lombards). Seven years afterwards, at a grand banquet, Alboïno drank deeply out of this cup, and then sent it to his wife, desiring her to drink wine with her father. In revenge for this brutal act, Rosmunda, with the help of Almachilde (or Helmichis), the king's armour-bearer, put her husband to death, and ascended the throne, making Almachilde her husband. Alboïno leaves behind him a daughter, Romilda, by a former wife. All this has occurred before the opening of the play, which shows Rosmunda and Romilda as bitterly hostile to each other, Romilda looking upon Rosmunda as the murderer of her father, whilst Rosmunda hates the other as the child of the slayer of her own parent. It also appears that Rosmunda entertains a suspicion that her husband, Almachilde, has formed an affection for Romilda. Almachilde enters, when Rosmunda is alone, and announces

that he has gained a victory over his enemies, chiefly through the aid of his trusty follower Ildovaldo. When she tells him that she purposes giving Romilda in marriage to their ally Alaric, his confused answers confirm her in her suspicions. The second act opens with the expression of Almachilde's thanks to Ildovaldo for his assistance. When he asks him what reward he shall give him, he begs for the hand of Romilda, whom he deeply loves, and entreats him to persuade Rosmunda to consent to their marriage. Romilda appears, and laments her approaching fate, and both Ildovaldo and Almachilde vow to rescue her from it. Rosmunda, joining them, is equally determined on sending her away forthwith. When Ildovaldo and Romilda are left alone for a short time, their mutual love is manifest. He repeats to her his vow to rescue her.

Almachilde next seeks an interview with Romilda, and avows to her his passion, but she repels his advances. Rosmunda enters, and finds him kneeling at her feet. Romilda boldly confesses her love for Ildovaldo, and her scorn and hatred of both Almachilde and Rosmunda, between whom the bitterest reproaches are interchanged when they are alone.

In order to revenge herself on her faithless husband, Rosmunda tells Ildovaldo that she will give him Romilda's hand, and instigates him to punish Almachilde, which he undertakes to do. Ildovaldo presently arranges with Romilda for their flight that night; but Almachilde enters, attended by his soldiers, proclaims his love for Romilda, and challenges Ildovaldo to single combat. The latter rejects the proposal with scorn, and Almachilde causes him to be led away as a prisoner. When left alone with Romilda, Almachilde, while again confessing his love, offers to make any reparation in his power, and even to surrender his throne to her in expiation of his fault.

With the view of rescuing Ildovaldo from Almachilde,

Romilda tells Rosmunda what has passed between herself and Almachilde, and Rosmunda, intent on revenge, promises to release Ildovaldo. Accordingly, she sets him free, feeling assured that he will destroy her husband. Instead of doing so, he returns to save Romilda from her power. Almachilde appears in triumph, his troops having easily overcome the partisans of Ildovaldo, in the absence of their leader. He tells the latter that he spares his life in consideration of his own having been just before saved by him. Rosmunda makes Almachilde give up his sword and dismiss his soldiers, while she calls in her own special followers. After a speech of bitter triumph, she stabs Romilda, to the horror of her two lovers. Ildovaldo, foiled in his attempt to kill her in return, stabs himself, and the curtain falls as Almachilde and Rosmunda reciprocally vow vengeance against each other.

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This tragedy, perhaps the least interesting of the whole, is entirely Alfieri's own conception, and is not based on historical facts, although the antecedent events set forth at the beginning of the Argument are true, and may be found fully described in chapter xlv. of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. It may be added that Rosmunda had soon to fly her country, accompanied by Helmichis, and that Clepho succeeded to the throne; that, to win the favor of Longinus, she herself poisoned Helmichis as he left the bath; and that he, feeling himself dying, held his dagger to her breast, and compelled her to finish the deadly draught.

Alfieri was very proud of this work, as being quite original, though the chief personage is historical, and the play is partly based on Bandello (Part III., Novel 18). He claims the four characters to be entirely distinct, with no traits in common. Rosmunda is of singular ferocity, but

not unnatural, considering the age, and the dreadful scenes she had gone through with her father and first husband; Almachilde is "at once guilty and innocent, unjust and ungrateful through passion, but just and magnanimous by nature;" Romilda is "in tender and lively contrast with the fierceness" of her rival; and Ildovaldo is "a perfect lover and sublime warrior."

Sismondi, however, does not concur in Alfieri's exalted opinion of his production.

The idea of the final scene, when Romilda's two lovers see her under her rival's dagger, is borrowed from Prévost's *Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité.*

# ROSMUNDA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| ROSMUNDA. | ROMILDA. |
| ALMACHILDE. | *Soldiers.* |
| ILDOVALDO. | *Followers of Ildovaldo.* |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Pavia.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ROSMUNDA, ROMILDA.

*Ros.* Perfidious woman, offer to the skies
Thy unavailing vows; address to Heaven,
Which hears thee not, thy ineffectual prayers.
Meanwhile the sanguinary battle rages
On the Ticino's shores; and even here
I hear its clamor: nor in doubtful hope
Doth my heart waver: certainty of conquest
Do I infer from the high martial virtues
Of my new consort.
*Rom.* Yes, if in the camp
Thy Almachilde be as much distinguish'd,
As he himself distinguish'd in this palace,
Then when he sacrificed with trait'rous hand
My father Alboïno, he will conquer:
But Clepho, who at present combats him,
Does not now lie immersed in indolence,
Clasp'd in a guilty consort's arms, as lay
Thy husband Alboïno on that night

Of memorable horrors. Round his standard
The noblest heroes Clepho hath collected:
He with his warriors doth at once maintain
The sacred cause of violated faith,
Of outraged Heav'n, of multitudes oppress'd,
And of the broken laws of Lombardy;
And fervently I pray for his success.

*Ros.* The dregs of Lombardy alone have flock'd
Round Clepho's rebel standard; he counts not
One man of noble blood among his soldiers:
Indeed, he well deserves that thou shouldst be
So strenuous in his cause. For art not thou
The daughter of a king? O fortunate
My fate, in truth, that made me not thy mother!
Sprung from a monarch, canst thou entertain
The vile desire to see the royal power
Cast with the throne to earth?

*Rom.* Upon the earth
Rather would I behold the throne, than fill'd
By a contaminating, guilty upstart.
The consort and the daughter of a king,
Say, wert not thou? thou, who hast dared to give
Thy hand in marriage to a trait'rous subject?

*Ros.* To any man who dared avenge my cause,
This hand of mine was a due recompense.
I was constrain'd by dire necessity
To luckless nuptials with thy cruel father.
Yet reeking with the life-blood of Comundus,
My wretched father, Alboïno gain'd me,
Orphan and captive: the vile Alboïno,
He that discomfited my partisans,
The spoiler of my patrimonial realm,
The' insulter of my wretchedness. At length
From this harsh fatal yoke of many years
I breathe. And now the rancor will burst forth,
Which with so many conflicts I suppress'd:
Now thee, detested child of Alboïno,
(Of whom, for my especial happiness,
I'm not the mother,) I will banish thee
For ever from my sight. Thee I dispatch
A spouse to Alaric.

*Rom.* I? . . . I the spouse
Of Alaric? . . .
*Ros.* Yes. This appears to thee
A small revenge; and small indeed I deem it,
When set against the evils I endured
From Alboïno; but it pleases me
Thus from my sight for ever to remove
The impious remnant of thy father's blood.
I, for the covenanted aid received
From Alaric against the troops of Clepho,
Have, to the former, pledged my royal faith,
As an equivalent, to yield thy hand.
Exult: thou wilt have, as thou dost deserve,
A spouse magnanimous: and though a realm
Vast as the one usurp'd by Alboïno,
The Eruli on Alaric bestow not,
Yet he assuredly may vie with him
In frantic cruelty. Thee, Alaric
Happy will make, as Alboïno me.
*Rom.* Do not expect that I should ever yield
To nuptials dire as these. If thou'rt victorious,
And thirstest for a plenary revenge,
Amid these very walls round which doth stray
The unavenged spectre of my father,
Where the vile traitor, by whose hands he fell,
Lies by thy side e'en in his very bed,
His daughter thou shalt immolate; and there
Opprobrious torments, and protracted pangs
On her inflict. But, dost thou dare to yield
My hand in marriage? . . .
*Ros.* Thou, with Alaric,
Wilt find the furies of a cruel step-dame
Join'd to the furies of a barbarous consort.
Those whom, at once, I fear and execrate,
With death I punish: thee, whom I fear not,
I punish with thy life.
*Rom.* Say, who can be
Thy rival in barbarity? Not I.
There are no tears, no cries of innocence,
That can thy bosom pierce: yet, save my tears,
I now have no defence . . . O Heav'ns!—But no:

I surely can, and I know how to die;
So that I go not to this destined marriage . . .
P'rhaps 'twould be more expedient now for me,
Bringing thy dagger, and thy noble arts,
To Alaric as dowry, thus to make
My coveted alliance cost him dear:
But am I Rosamund?
*Ros.* I am; and feel
Proud in the consciousness that I am she.
The world knows well that I was not the first
To practise cruelty.
*Rom.* If tow'rds thyself
My sire was cruel, rights of war produced
That cruelty; but thou since . . .
*Ros.* Rights of war?
In the most cruel and inhuman clime,
Say, was it e'er a right, that impious rage
And sacrilegious scorn should violate
The bones unburied of the dead?—For ever
Do I not see him at that dreadful supper,
(Banquet of death to me!) with pride, and blood,
And fury drunk, at his vile table seated,
Wantonly gibing? Do not I behold him,
Sated with wine and brutal gluttony,
(Ah, horrid sight!) with a malicious coolness
Quaff his protracted and intemp'rate draughts
From my slain father's skull? Then send to me,
O'erflowing with the dreadful beverage,
The execrable chalice? In my ears
Doth not that scornful sanguinary challenge
Eternally re-echo?: "Drink, Rosmunda;
"Drink with thy father," tauntingly he cried.—
And thou, from such a monster born, dost stand
Before my eyes?—If, having slain him first,
I had suborned the vilest of our slaves
First to contaminate, then murder thee;
If having burn'd your bodies, I had then
Scatter'd your ashes to the winds of Heaven;
Would my revenge the outrage e'er have equall'd?
Go; vex me now no more. 'Twill be to me
A grateful spectacle to see thee dragg'd,

Spite of thyself, to this abhorr'd alliance:
Now thou in vain resistest; thou by force
Shalt surely go. Be other hands than mine
Polluted with thy blood. But, go meanwhile;
I do not wish thee here, now I expect
My Almachilde victor from the camp.
Go; and prepare thee by to-morrow's dawn
For thy departure: 'tis my will: obey.

## Scene II.

ROSMUNDA.

*Ros.* . . . How much I hate her, not e'en I can tell.
There are sufficient reasons for this hatred;
But it too nearly doth concern my peace,
The reason that is greatest and most valid,
Not to investigate. A dreadful doubt
Distracts my heart . . . But p'rhaps I am deceived . . .
Ah! no; there is no doubt; the certainty
Is no less positive than desperate:
My consort, with those alienated looks
Beholds her not, with which the murderer
Should contemplate the daughter of the murder'd.
He speaks sometimes without aversion to her;
And also speaks without aversion of her.
P'rhaps by her false insinuating arts,
For I can ne'er impute it to her charms,
He is entangled? . . . This suspicion never
Shall ripen into certainty. Far, far,
From hence, for ever be Romilda; far . . .
At such a thought I feel my burning blood
Rush through each throbbing vein. Must I, in thee,
O Alboïno's execrated child,
A rival also find?— I must be silent . . .
Hither comes Almachilde . . . Let us see
Whether or not I am deceived in this.

## Scene III.

ROSMUNDA, ALMACHILDE, SOLDIERS.

*Ros.* Already the glad shouts, the floating banners,
And the demeanor of the soldiery,
All, all proclaim it; thou art conqueror.
*Al.* Safe, and secure, and victor, thou dost see me;
But not by my own prowess. Life and triumph,
Freedom and kingdom, Ildovaldo only
Confers on me this day. He was my shield;
He my magnanimous defender: he,
In my behoof, such proofs of valor gave,
As far surpass my pow'rs of recompense.
*Ros.* If I conjecture rightly, thy sublime
Impetuous valor had impell'd thee thither
Where most the danger raged. Ah! little then,
Didst thou recall to mind the agonies,
The tears, the apprehensions of Rosmunda.
Thou know'st how much I fear'd thy too great valor:
Yet in the promise which thou mad'st to me
Before the battle, not to risk thyself
Incautiously or vainly, I confided.
This I besought of thee; and thou to me
Didst swear compliance: ah! what should I be,
Tell me, bereft of thee? My throne is nothing,
My life is nothing, if with thee not shared.
*Al.* Thee, and thy love, did I recall to mind:
But I was forced, by bravely meeting death,
To show myself Rosmunda's worthy spouse,
And worthy of the crown of Lombardy.
How could I, in the camp, save with my sword,
Make an atonement for that fatal blow
Wrought by my guilty hand? . . .
*Ros.* What? dost thou dare
Profess repentance that thou hast avenged me? . . .
*Al.* Ah, yes! 'Tis not the vengeance, but the mode
By which that vengeance was obtain'd, that grieves me,
And which I shall eternally regret.
To cleanse my character from such a stain,
I was compell'd, e'en to the latest drop,
With reckless prodigality, to spill

My tainted blood.—I heard myself proclaim'd,
With fulminating vehemence, a traitor,
By Clepho and his heroes; I confess,
That to the centre of my guilty heart
The well-deserved, insufferable name
Resounded. I deny it not, that then,
Mindless of all except my tarnish'd honor,
Where most the combatants and weapons thicken'd,
I fling myself: with overpow'ring rage
Desp'rate, I wheel in circles my bright sword;
And with its trusty blade give ample proof
That I far less deserved the name of traitor,
Than that of hero.—Instantly around me,
Of slain, and of disabled warriors brave,
Mountains are piled; when my good charger falls
Transfix'd beneath me; to my feet I spring;
But, on the ground, slipp'ry with blood, my foot
Ill-planted, slides, so that I fall again.—
Swiftly the hostile troops conglomerate,
And with their strength collected, rush upon me.
In vain my impotent and baffled sword
Gives ill-aim'd proofs of its expiring prowess:
When, swifter than the lightning's vollied flash,
'Mid troops, and spears, and shrieks, and swords, and blows,
With a few brave ones, Ildovaldo opens,
E'en to my very side, a fearful track.
The' assailants instantaneously disperse;
To right and left they fly; in rout complete,
Broken, they slink away. My followers,
Having resumed their courage, on their heels
Press irresistibly; their flashing swords
Obtain an ample harvest; whence, at once,
The dubious fortune of the day is changed
To overthrow, and universal carnage.

*Ros.* At length I breathe: at length thou'rt safe: I fear'd
No other obstacle to thy success
Than that of thy imprudent hardihood.
Already 'mid the chiefest of this realm
Was Ildovaldo rank'd; now will he be
Second to none but thee.

*Al.* And now towards him
So much more grateful I am bound to be,
E'en in proportion, as before the fight
Some envious miscreants sought to render him
By me the more suspected. He it was
Whose foresight warn'd me not to trust the aid
Of Alaric, late given, haply faithless:
More than the assistance of a thousand others
His sword avails: he is my chosen champion;
And he not only has with triumph closed
The fortunes of the day, but of the war.
Fame, though with diff'rent and discordant tongues,
Yet, with them all, speaks prodigies of him,
Now, that this Clepho is his prisoner;
Now, that he's wounded mortally by him;
And there are those who furthermore affirm
That he is slain already. I refused
To trace the footsteps of the fugitives;
I am accustom'd only to behold
The faces of my foes: but their defeat,
By Ildovaldo's lofty hardihood,
Ere now is consummated. I rely
On him implicitly; he, in one day,
Hath torn out by the roots the cause of war.

*Ros.* I grieve that Alaric's retarded arms
Had not a share in this day's victory:
Yet not the less with him will I preserve
My faith inviolate: in future times
He may assist us; and, which is a point
Of more importance for us to remember,
Us he can always injure. 'Tis decreed
Romilda should be his: this I to her
Already have announced.—Wouldst thou believe it?
She dares deny her hand to Alaric.

*Al.* O! can I hope so much? . . . And can she dare
So much to hope? . . .

*Ros.* Yes.—But in vain denies it:
I have inform'd her that to-morrow's dawn
Must witness her departure. Rather would I
Forfeit my throne than e'er betray my faith.

*Al.* But yet, . . . compassion for the hapless daughter . . .

*Ros.* Daughter of whom? . . . compassion, dost thou say? . . .
What do I hear? . . . Should she, who is the child
Of him who slew my sire, be aught but wretched?
*Al.* It seems to me, that by severe commands
We should not sadden this victorious day.
Romilda is the last remaining issue
Of the old kings of Lombardy: e'en yet
We on the throne are insecurely seated:
Each subject here doth cherish in his heart
The recollection of the martial virtues,
And of the rapidly increasing power
Of Alboïno, their legitimate lord.
The Lombards, led by his victorious steps,
Have ravaged, bound in fetters, or have burn'd
The whole of Italy, far as the Po
Doth water her, far as the Apennines,
The Alps, the Adriatic sea extend.
The slaughter of a king so prosperous
Entails on us a mighty stress of care,
Invet'rate hatred, and incessant peril.
Tired of an arbitrary king, the people
Presumed to raise the standard of revolt:
'Twas easy to repress them: since the warriors
Preferr'd the undivided sway of one.
But if the troops should see the daughter wrong'd
Of their once great commander, who could then
To their allegiance trust? And what are we,
Tell me, bereft of them?
*Ros.* It is to me
Without a precedent, and unexpected,
That thou to-day, in an affair of state,
Shouldst feel discordantly from what I feel.
As I resign to thee; but, in my palace,
shall prevent my being absolute
of peace?—Ah, do thou come to give
me the repose it so much wants!
open hostile arms thou art to me
but each less noble care, unmeet
a proud warrior, doth to me belong.

## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

ALMACHILDE, ILDOVALDO.

*Al.* Come, Ildovaldo, to my arms; embrace me;
Thou of my glory art the chief support.
Subdued, I must confess, by thy deserts,
I have no recompense that equals them:
But yet, if I am able to . . .
*Il.* My lord,
Ascribe it not to merit in myself
If near the royal standard I have fought
Against the banners of the faithless Clepho:
From my first unripe years, my ancestors
Have in my breast instill'd such principles,
That still the cause, whate'er the cause might be,
Of him who reign'd, seem'd sacred in my eyes.
*Al.* Thy modest speech gives of a loyal heart
A pledge most unequivocal: I know it;
A man of prowess, ready to do more,
Little esteems what he has done already.
But, what more now remains for thee to do?
Thou hast completely routed, or destroy'd,
Those my perfidious foes, whose cowardice
Provided them such rapid wings for flight.
Breathless myself, I left them in thy hands:
I knew that thy sword, where it was at work,
My sword would supersede.
*Il.* Fortune resolved
To smile on my endeavors. In thy power,
Clepho comes manacled before thee; smitten,
But with no mortal wound: if at his fall
Some sparks of valor glimmer'd in the hearts
Of his adherents, soon were they extinguish'd;
And with their leader all their spirit fell.
*Al.* My heart, O Ildovaldo, put to proof.
Is there, in all the world, a special object
To which thy wishes tend? Ah! speak; I dare not
Offer thee any thing; but yet (who can

Except thyself?) say what is that reward
Which least would wound thy virtue.
*Il.* Prince, I will not,
Since such to thee I am not, in thy presence
Assume the guise of a devoted friend.
It was the throne, not thee, I sought to-day
To rescue by my arm; the throne, whose safety
To-day in thy existence was involved.
Some one in future p'rhaps may fill that throne
For whom I should account I yielded little,
In yielding life itself: hence, in its cause
Was I a hardy combatant. Thou see'st
That to serve thee was not my chiefest thought.
Hence thou art not my debtor; and already
From the o'erpow'ring load of gratitude
Thou art by me released.
*Al.* The more I hear,
The more do I admire thee. Yet by thee,
In this high contest, I will not be conquer'd.
Myself thou lovest not, and this to me
Have others said; yet hence to trust to thee
A portion of the fight, nay, e'en the posts
Of greatest confidence, I never doubted.
I blame thee not, that thou wert rather urged
By the attainted honor of the throne,
Than by my peril, valiantly to fight.
I know that to a hero like thyself,
The means by which I sit upon the throne
Cannot seem worthy: I myself am first
Those means to execrate: but thou dost know,
My gen'rous enemy, what horrible
And stern necessity impell'd me to them.
E'en me, another's subject, e'en myself
Once as thy equal thou didst see; nor then
(I dare to challenge thee to this) seem'd I
Unworthy thy esteem. Alas! my fame
Is now no longer spotless: learn thou now,
That I, in heart, far, far more infamous,
E'en than I'm deem'd by others, deem myself.
But on the bloody throne in indolence
I do not sleep; and hope to clear myself,

In part, of the foul blot of treachery,
(Although it never can be quite effaced.)
*Il.* I thought assuredly thy heart had been
Far more corrupted by the name of king:
But yet it is not sound. To feel remorse,
And yet retain...
*Al.* And wish I to retain?
Ah! long ere now...
*Il.* But yet this throne; thou know'st...
*Al.* I know that to another it belongs;
And that it is not mine...
*Il.* Then...
*Al.* Listen to me.
'Tis in my pow'r to make myself to-day
Far less unworthy of the throne I fill.
Hear me; and afterwards, if thou canst do it,
Refuse to countenance my purposes...
But, whither does my blind desire impel me?
I have not yet a recompense discover'd
For thy past services, and yet presume
New ones to seek of thee?
*Il.* Ah! yes: speak on.
Deeming me one that for magnanimous deeds
Expects no recompense, thou dost alone,
By this conviction, recompense me amply.
Speak; wherein can I serve thee?
*Al.* Do not hope
That I shall tell it thee on other terms,
Except thou first, if in the world there be
Aught wherein I can serve thee, at my hands
Challenge that benefit. If of the realm
Thou wishest a great part (by merit all
Is thine); or if some less ambitious thought,
Some gentler impulse, agitate thy heart,
From me conceal it not: I know full well,
All blessings are not centred in the throne:
I know that there are other things, which gain'd,
Would far more constitute my happiness;
I know that much is wanting to my peace.
I know that in my heart an impulse lives
Which is the master-spring of my existence:

And more it burns in me, the more it meets
With obstacles.—Ah! do thou then to me
Thyself unbosom, that I somewhat may
Benefit thee, now that thou canst so much,
Though others' rights thou'hold inviolate,
At once my cause assist.
*Il.* I will speak out,
Since thou wilt have it so.—I wish not power;
Ah no! ill couldst thou this confer; and gifts
These always are of penitence and blood.
But since thou'rt ready to unfold to me
Thy inmost thoughts, I will not of my own
Be niggardly. That which alone I wish,
From thee would nothing take, and to myself
Were life.
*Al.* Name it; 'tis thine.
*Il.* For many a day
In love I've lived: Rosmunda can alone
Thwart the accomplishment of my desires;
Thou only canst persuade her to relent.
*Al.* And she that has inflamed thee?...
*Il.* Is Romilda...
*Al.* What do I hear!... Lov'st thou Romilda?...
*Il.* Yes...
But whence in thee such wonderment?...
*Al.* To me
Thy love was utterly unknown.
*Il.* But why,
Now that I tell it thee, art thou thus troubled?
Why thus dost hesitate?...
*Al.* I?... Pardon me...
'Tis not surprise...—Romilda! and hast thou
Thus for a long time loved her?
*Il.* What means this?
Perchance my love displeases thee? Perchance
That love doth not become me? Though she be
Of royal origin, I am not vile.
Rosmunda is the daughter of a king,
And she disdain'd not to bestow her hand
On thee, my equal.
*Al.* Is there any rank

For thee too lofty?... But, thou know'st; ... Rosmunda
Disposes of Romilda's hand; ... and I ...
*Il.* Canst thou, perchance, gain nothing from Rosmunda?
And yet from thee she can obtain so much.—
Enough. I am already satisfied:
Thou hast already royally rewarded
All my much-vaunted merits, by a promise.
*Al.* Ah no! believe it not; ... I will ... But speak ...
—Romilda! ... And doth she return thy love?
*Il.* Romilda ..., See, she comes.

## Scene II.

ALMACHILDE, ROMILDA, ILDOVALDO.

*Rom.* O Heav'ns! with whom
Do I behold him?—O my baffled wishes!
Hast thou, at last, entwined thy spurious crown
With laurel wreaths? Does treachery to-day
The palm of conquest gain?—Well, be it so.—
But thou, O warrior, of a noble soul,
O Ildovaldo, wherefore dost thou waste
Thy lofty efforts in a cause like his?
Should so much virtue stoop to make itself
A shield to so much infamy?
*Al.* Towards me,
Lady, eternally implacable,
Is there no length of time, then, and no mode
Of assiduity, that may avail,
E'en in the least degree, to calm, or soothe
Thy just disdain? How in the camp I sought
That death, from which himself deliver'd me,
Can Ildovaldo tell thee.—Ah! thy pity
Tow'rds me was ill directed: I should there
Have died, since here my victory offends.—
But Heav'n, who knows my heart's true innocence,
(Ah, were my hand as pure!) Heav'n, p'rhaps, to-day
Gave me not vainly conquest and renown,
There where I sought for death.
*Il.* Accuse me not,
Romilda, that I fought. Clepho with arms
Sought not the camp thy father to avenge;

Himself as the destroyer of the throne
He haughtily proclaim'd; and for that throne
I combated.
*Rom.* To this oppressèd race,
Clepho, as he profess'd, once more design'd
To give back freedom, or himself to reign;
And he adopted, to obtain his purpose,
Means far less infamous than those employ'd
By thee his predecessor. In the camp,
In the broad light of day, he boldly challenged
Man to meet man with soldier-like defiance:
And, if the fates decree that an usurper
Should fill my empty patrimonial throne,
Let it, at least, belong to the most valiant.
*Al.* Breathes there the man who dares to call me coward?
In their invasions of the throne, have others
More brav'ry shown than I in its defence?
Dost thou eternally resent? The error
That I committed with unwilling mind,
(This all well know) I only can repair;
Yes, I alone. To yield thee good for ill
To me will be delightful: with my blood
I have meanwhile the empty throne defended;
Thine is that throne, I know; I swear to thee,
Thy rights I ne'er forget. Long, long ere now,
Had I obtain'd my wish, thou hadst possess'd it.
But now Rosmunda fills it, and it is . . .
*Rom.* Polluted throne, the meed of treachery,
To others I without regret resign it;
It let Rosmunda fill: she, with thyself,
Of such a heritage is well deserving.—
But, if thy penitence be not dissembled;
If to such gen'rous words the practices
Of a degraded soul could e'er accord;
Obtain for me, I pray thee, not the throne
Of my inhuman step-dame; but obtain
For me alone the empire o'er myself.
I ask a free life; or I ask for death.
As if already in my murder'd father
She had not fully satisfied her rage,

Impious Rosmunda, seeking to inflict
Torments more exquisite, protracts my life,
And sends me as a spouse to Alaric.
*Il.* What do I hear?
*Al.* O Ildovaldo! listen;
Thou now canst judge thyself, if causelessly
I spoke with doubts . . .
*Il.* The wife of Alaric?
*Al.* Ah! no . . .
*Rom.* To Alaric hath she betroth'd me;
Of his assistance, never sent, am I
The recompense: and she, who of my throne,
And of my father, robb'd me, hath to this
Plighted her faith: and (who would e'er believe it?)
Rosmunda will, on no condition, now
Betray her promise. By to-morrow's dawn,
I to these nuptial rites am doom'd to go:
But that to-morrow's dawn has not yet come.—
Ah! if than she thou canst be less atrocious;
If 'tis indeed my fate, that I to-day
Must be a suitor to my father's slayer;
Ah! try at least to wean her from this purpose . . .
*Al.* Shall I try this? to thee I freely swear
That thou shalt never go.
*Il.* And, by this sword,
I swear the same. Rosmunda, thou shalt hear me . . .
*Rom.* Behold; she comes in rage.

## Scene III.

ROSMUNDA, ALMACHILDE, ROMILDA, ILDOVALDO.

*Ros.* Dost thou thus here
Loiter with her? thou, also, dost thou lend
An ear to her seditious words?—This is
A day of joy: what boots it then, brave warriors,
To tarry 'mid the everlasting groans
Of this devoted daughter of misfortune? . . .
Sigh'st thou, poor maiden? wherefore dost thou sigh?
Ragauso, with a royal retinue,
Prepared to execute my orders, waits
There to conduct thee, where auspicious nuptials,

And where another more illustrious throne,
Court thy acceptance.
*Al.* But, of Alaric . . .
*Ros.* Well? does not such a king deserve her hand?
*Al.* So cruel . . .
*Ros.* Cruel e'en as Alboïno?
She from a blood doth spring, in whom the sight
Of cruelty, whatever shape it wear,
Can ne'er excite surprise.
*Il.* Such marriage rites . . .
*Al.* To all disastrous . . .
*Ros.* Dost thou disapprove them?
*Al.* She her consent refuses . . .
*Ros.* Thou dost, then,
Refuse it: I consent.
*Rom.* Does it distress thee
That he is not so barbarous as thou?
*Ros.* And dost thou think that he for thee feels pity?
Pity for thee? What darest thou to say?
For thee he feels no pity: woefully
Thou art deceived . . .
*Al.* As far as human breast
Can, in its fullest force, I feel it all;
And I avow it; and, if thou compel me,
I also will display it. Who can see,
Nor feel compassion for her, who can see
Such insults heap'd upon a royal maiden? . . .
*Ros.* All men may pity her, save Almachilde.
*Il.* If yet thou bear'st in mind the plenteous laurels
Which, for thyself, my sword has reap'd to-day,
My counsel thou wilt hear. Much loss to thee,
If thou dost wrong Romilda, may accrue.
*Al.* Yes, fatal loss.
*Il.* Thou wilt, if wise, abstain . . .
*Ros.* Wise is Romilda; and she will obey me.
Keep thou for others thy advice. Dost thou
Already magnify thy services?
What hast thou done? thy duty.—Thou, my husband,
Dissentest thou from me? and dar'st thou say it?
And must I lofty arguments of state
Discuss with thee before these witnesses?

Let us depart; ah come: for a short time
Leave her to penitence and wiser thoughts:
Her fears will give her, when she is alone,
Suggestions more judicious. Leave her now.—
Romilda, heard'st thou? Or by dawn of day
Go willingly from hence, and thou shalt have
An honorable escort by thy side,
Led by Ragauso; or refuse to go,
And he shall be enjoin'd to drag thee hence.

## Scene IV.

ILDOVALDO, ROMILDA.

*Il.* Drag her? . . . what do I hear! Ah, kill me first . . .
O Heav'ns! Romilda, must I lose thee then? . . .
*Rom.* Ah! since the moment that my father died,
And I beheld myself within the power
Of such a step-dame, in my breast I cherish
No other hope, except the hope of death.
*Il.* But, while I breathe . . .
*Rom.* Believe me, there remains
Nought else for me. I am prepared to die,
More than perchance thou thinkest: in my heart
I wish'd to see thee yet once more; to give thee
The last farewell of love . . .
*Il.* Ah, hold thy peace!
Loving thour't loved, and speak'st to me of death,
While I breathe vital air, and wield this sword?
My soul, indeed, with sorrow is oppress'd;
Yet I despair not.
*Rom.* From what quarter, then,
Can I expect relief?
*Il.* And cannot I
Avail to rescue thee from hands like these? . . .
*Rom.* Yes, thou mayst do it: but what then will happen?
They have a throne; and, in abundance, hence
The instruments of persecution: fierce,
But also subtle, is Rosmunda's wrath.
Can that be baffled? . . . And should I once more
Fall in her hands? . . . Now flatter not thyself:
Except by death, my faith I cannot keep

Inviolate to thee: thy sword, thy valor,
Thy life, do thou preserve, blows to inflict,
By which my father's shade may be appeased . . .
And my shade also. Live; I leave to thee
A king betray'd and father to avenge,
And thy true lover.
*Il.* What is this I hear?
O Heav'ns! my heart thou rendest. Ah! . . . if thou
Shouldst ever leave me . . . certainly for vengeance,
And nothing else, I'll live. But yet I hope
That thou wilt see fulfill'd, with thy own eyes,
The vengeance of my monarch, of thy father.
'Tis true that kingly pow'r I do not boast;
But much the terror of my name can do:
I in the bosoms of the valiant reign,
The abject I despise. Beneath the banners
Of Alboïno I have fought already;
I, in the camp, have many partisans
In arms accoutred; in the ranks of war
Oft have the Lombards witness'd my exploits.
Each living man the venerated name
Of Alboïno with a sigh pronounces;
And thou'rt that Alboïno's only child.—
And if 'twere otherwise, say, if thou canst,
Whether, 'mid those who show thee violence,
One man can be adduced, who, in his heart,
Burns with an elevated flame like mine,
So as to bear comparison with me?
Rosmunda, much as step-dame can, indeed,
Hates thee; but I love more than she abhors,
I, who at thy least nod would rush to death;
To give it, or receive it.
*Rom.* O sublime
Incomparable lover! . . . Yet though great,
Thy fondness hath no strength to countervail
Her frantic and inexorable hate . . .
*Il.* Think not that I am blind to what is passing:
I am sustain'd by valid arguments.
Add too, that Almachilde, as thou heardest,
Dares to oppose the execrable rite.
*Rom.* From him what canst thou hope?

*Il.* Were I constrain'd
To stoop for thy deliv'rance to deceit,
I on his aid should ground no trifling hope.
I see already that his guilty consort
Has become irksome to him. To remorse
He yet appears to me accessible;
The fear of her alone, in which he lives,
Renders him timid and irresolute.
That which he feebly counteracts in words,
I can induce him more effectively
To counteract in deeds. I do not doubt
My skill to fortify his half-resolves
With my entire resolves.

*Rom.* Thou little knowest
Rosmunda. Dost thou dream that force can be
A hindrance to her will? Prayers I address'd
To Almachilde, (and I now repent it,)
That he would intercede for me. Vain hope!
Shall that man, who to a flagitious wife
Has sold his reputation and himself;
That man who owes his all to nothing else
Except his blind and infamous obedience;
Shall he against her venture to assist me?

*Il.* Ere it be night, let prayers, or menaces,
Or blows take place, let fate determine which;
So that I lose thee not: still of this day
Enough remains my purpose to mature.
Quickly shall I discover if in others
Or in myself alone I must confide.
Hither shall I return to thee ere long:
If then our only remedy is death,
Death shall it be. Then, then will I receive
The last farewell which thou wouldst give me now;
But thou no sooner shalt have given it,
Than, drunk with love, and anger, and revenge,
I swear to open with my own right hand
A horrid path of blood . . . At least the death
Of many victims shall precede my own.
But can it be that others can exult
In our destruction? No one do I see
Betwixt the throne and thee, except Rosmunda.

*Rom.* And Almachilde? . . .
*Il.* Say'st thou, Almachilde?
To-day this sword of mine his life preserved:
And should he be ungrateful, this my sword
May also give his death-wound. Time and chance
Shall shape my independent purposes.—
Meanwhile, a swift return, eternal faith,
A lofty vengeance for thy murder'd father,
I swear to thee.
*Rom.* I would not rob thy heart
Of all its hope; but in myself one hope
Alone still lingers, once more to behold thee:
And on that hope I'll live. That I should now,
If thine I am not, drag on life, in vain
Wouldst thou desire. And that I should be thine,
What expectation can I now retain? . . .
But in returning here to me, be not
Tardy, I do conjure of thee.
*Il.* I tremble
When I behold how desolate thou art.
I ask thee not to live; I only ask
Delay, till death be indispensable.
This swear to me.
*Rom.* I swear it.
*Il.* I believe thee.
To give my last instructions, hence I fly;
And here I'll speedily return to thee.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

ALMACHILDE, ROMILDA.

*Al.* . . . Ah! pardon me, if p'rhaps inopportunely
I dared to ask of thee on this thy threshold
A transient audience: but to prove to thee
How thoroughly my heart doth disavow
The cruelty of thy malignant step-dame,
Is of deep import to my bosom's peace.

*Rom.* And shall I trust thee? Ah, if this were true! . . .
But what? am I so wretched, that I ought
To owe the smallest solace to thy bounty? . . .
O my hard fate! I am, alas! too wretched.—
From these abominable marriage rites
Ah, do thou respite me: and I perchance
To thee shall owe my peace.
*Al.* Far more than this,
Far more, I'm ready to perform for thee . . .
The prey of Alaric, by whom we've seen
Two wives already slain, one by the sword,
The next by poison? Thou, O Heav'ns, design'd
Of ev'ry virtue and accomplishment
To be the recompense? and who couldst make
Ev'ry man happy by thy presence e'en?—
Ah, no; this, while I breathe, shall never be!
E'en if thou wished'st it, I would prevent it:
Infer from thence, if I will suffer it,
When unexampled violence prepares
To drag thee there. First arguments and prayers,
Then shall Rosmunda witness menaces;
And lastly deeds. And if I cannot win her,
She shall be wrested from the monstrous project.
There lives not one more ardent in the cause
Of thy defence than I: or thou shalt spend
Thy days within this palace, or I'll lose
My kingdom with my life.
*Rom.* And wherefore thus
Gen'rous art thou tow'rds me? . . .
*Al.* I never felt
Torment more exquisite from any cause
Than from thy hate.
*Rom.* But, can I ever cease
To hate thee? In indignant menaces
My unavenged father still . . . .
*Al.* O Heav'ns!
I kill'd him not: Rosmunda murder'd him.
*Rom.* 'Tis known to all that, by her menaces,
Thou to the horrid treason wert compell'd:
But yet the' alternative 'twixt thy own death,
And the inflicting death upon thy king,

She gave to thee. 'Tis true, that thou already,
Not knowing of the impious stratagem,
Hadst stain'd thy monarch's bed; but with thy blood,
And with the blood of the immodest woman,
Thou wert required to wash out such a stain;
That was the sole atonement for thy crime:
And thou dar'dst make atonement with a crime
Of a far deeper dye? That death which thou
Gavest another, to thyself was due:
Yet thou still sleepest in the injured bed;
A subject thou, the consort of thy king,
And the usurp'd and blood-besprinkled throne
Thou keepest still; and, doing this, dar'st thou
Boast of thy noble heart? speak of kind deeds?
And dost thou wish that I should trust to thee?
And dar'st thou hope that I should hate thee less?—
Portentous, melancholy as they are,
Let me no more from the eternal night
Of silence such remembrances recall:
I may suppress them, when I hear thee not.—
Rescue me now from this extreme distress,
And p'rhaps thou mayst appear to me my saviour.
But, if I think of thee, what art thou else
To me, except the slayer of my father?

*Al.* Must then my tears, remorse, and penitence,
Avail me nothing?

*Rom.* To this subject now
Wherefore direct thy thoughts? Can I hurt thee?
What signifies to thee my enmity?
The feeble daughter of a murder'd king,
What profits it to flatter her?

*Al.* To fail
Is human; but contrition for a fault
Distinguishes the virtuous from the wicked.
Thou canst not know the anguish of my heart;
Ah, if thou knew'st it!—From the day I've wept,
That I became inhabitant of these
Lugubrious walls, where always I behold thee
Immersed in tears; yet thou at once art seen
Mild in thy anger, modest in thy grief,
Magnanimous in suffering . . . What heart

Is there so hard that doth not feel for thee
Emotions of compassion?
*Rom.* Thy compassion?
It is too hard for me to suffer it . . .
Yet ah, my destiny! . . . I am not able
Entirely to despise it.
*Al.* Ere that aught
Which I can do deserves thy gratitude,
Say: is the fact that he is cruel deem'd,
The only cause of thy antipathy
To Alaric?
*Rom.* And Alboïno's daughter,
Doth she not, in accepting thy assistance,
Betray herself sufficiently? Wilt thou
Also that she participate with thee
The secrets of her heart?
*Al.* There then exists
With thee a motive for reserve towards me?
P'rhaps thus the means of an effectual aid . . .
*Rom.* And if there were another? . . . But thou art . . .—
What saidst thou?—Hitherto I here have lived,
And here 'twould soothe me by my father's side
To share his tomb: behold, sufficient motive.
All my thoughts now are centred in the grave;
But death to me would be less cruel here:
Hence this I ask from you, to you a small,
But to myself a most important gift.
*Al.* Death? Ah, Romilda! I to thee repeat it,
Here shalt thou have a cheerful dwelling place;
And more I say to thee: I hope to see thee
Here reinstated in thy sacred rights.
I can thy throne, if not thy sire, restore;
I ought to do it, and I will; and I
Will make thee, by no doubtful proofs, behold
The bias of my heart; . . . how deeply there . . .
Nay how indelibly . . . I bear impress'd . . .
Thy image . . .
*Rom.* What is this I hear? Alas!
What looks! . . . What meanest thou to say to me?
*Al.* . . . That which I cannot now conceal from thee;
That which thou mayest on my trembling face

Now read engraved . . . I burn, and long have burn'd, . . .
With love . . . for thee.
*Rom.* Alas! what dar'st thou say?
O cruel destiny! hast thou reserved me
For such an outrage?
*Al.* If thou dost esteem
My love an outrage, I have ample means
Myself to punish . . .
*Rom.* Ah, thou vile one! dar'st thou
Color with virtue thy atrocious passion?
*Al.* Alas! . . . O hear me . . . criminal my love, . . .
But criminal effects thou ne'er shalt see . . .
For thee I will do all; but from thyself
I ask for nothing.
*Rom.* Peace. Shall thou, defiled
Still with my father's blood, name love to me?
Thou, love to me?—thou art Rosmunda's spouse;
And of no other worthy.
*Al.* Ah! what name
Of execration do I not deserve! . . .
Yet, that I love thee is my destiny,
Inevitable destiny. And never,
Never will I this prostrate posture quit,
Until . . .
*Rom.* Arise, be silent, and depart . . .
But, here comes one who quickly will extinguish
A flame like this.
*Al.* Whom is it I behold?

## Scene II.

ROSMUNDA, ALMACHILDE, ROMILDA.

*Ros.* Me thou dost see, perfidious traitor, me.—
Ye are well match'd in turpitude: to learn
The certainty of your disloyalty,
Stabs me the deepest; but I will not bear
Its penalty alone. Your guilty plots
I come to disappoint.—Dost thou, O ingrate,
Render me such a recompense?—And thou,
With thy feign'd virtue . . .

*Rom.* Keep them all for him,
Those names appropriate to himself alone:
He is the sole delinquent; he the traitor,
He the dissembling liar; he maintains
With thee such faith as thou deservest; such
As should the guilty with the guilty keep.
I the delinquent am not; he induced me,
By base contrivances, to hear his words . . .

*Al.* I will myself, since thou hast learn'd a part,
Divulge the whole to thee. I love, adore
Romilda; nor is this a flame at which
I need to blush. Seek in thyself, and thou
The guilty reason speedily wilt find,
Whence thou hast not my love, as thou pretendest.
I, not for crimes design'd, could I e'er love
Her who seduced me to them? Space immense
Betwixt Rosmunda and Romilda lies;
Thou feel'st that it is so. I love Romilda,
And traitors I abhor. In what perdition
Thy fierce and haughty vengeance can o'erwhelm me,
I know already; yes, thou art to me
But too completely known! Ah, could I thus,
As I have slain her father, could I die!
Could I appease Romilda's just disdain
By dying! Ah, that I had never been
To thee a husband! Had I never been
A traitor and a regicide, then haply
Romilda had not had her heart so closed
Against my love.

*Rom.* I? I should hate thee still,
Not the assassin of my sire, not girt
With his ill-gotten crown, and not espoused
To a fierce step-mother. Far greater merit,
Far greater than thy own, far nobler heart,
Do I require to make me hear of love:
E'en as my murder'd father renders thee
To me abominate, so much and more,
Thy wife betray'd, though such a wife she be,
Makes thee degraded in my eyes. Through her
Thou rankest first amongst the infamous;
Through her thou'rt famous; and your common crime,

That blood which thou hast spill'd, should join you closely
In an eternal bond. I cannot suffer,
E'en to my own advantage, treachery;
Still less endure the traitor. In my breast
I bear another nobler flame, which never
Will tinge my face with any blush of shame.
I am prepared to die, but not prepared,
No, never, never to resign my love . . .

*Al.* Thou lovest?

*Rom.* Ildovaldo.

*Al.* This indeed,
This is indeed to me a mortal blow.

*Ros.* Speak'st thou the truth, or dost thou still deceive me?
Dost thou love Ildovaldo?

*Rom.* I adore him
With such affection as not e'en in thought
Ye can conceive; much less, then, feel in heart:
We are not for participated crimes
Scourged with remorseful visitings; our souls
Unspotted, 'twixt each other have no strife,
Save that of which shall love the other best.
To him those mournful days, those days in which
I have perchance unluckily survived
My murder'd sire, to him I consecrate:
To me his life, his lofty fame, his sword,
His sword invincible, he consecrates.
But, should our life be cheated of its objects;
Should we of all deliv'rance, all revenge
Be disappointed; yet e'en then were we
Eternally less desolate than you.
Death were our refuge then; and unsubdued
Shall we obtain it; for to what is vile
The noble never yield; exultingly
Shall we embrace it, since betwixt us shared,
From penitence and from reproaches free,
From terror and remorse; and finally
We shall obtain a death a thousand times
More sweet than your detested, fearful lives.

*Ros.* Enough; depart. — Thou soon shalt know thy fate.

## Scene III.

ROSMUNDA, ALMACHILDE.

*Ros.* Perfidious, infamous, disloyal, perjured . . .
At last, without constraint, I may pour out
On thee my curses. Dost thou love another? . . ,
But Heav'n hath well ordain'd; and such return
Awaits thy passion as thy passion merits.
O joy ineffable! For who could bear,
Who, save myself, the love of such a creature?—
Almost Romilda hath my fondness won,
Since I have heard her speak to thee. O why,
As much as she does, cannot I detest thee?
To me dost thou return such recompense,
To whom thou ow'st so much? To me, O vile one,
Who even from the throne to thee have stoop'd?
Now answer me; . . . but what canst thou adduce
That may extenuate thy turpitude?

*Al.* Extenuate? Delinquents always seek,
And seldom find, a plausible excuse.
But to love virtue such as never Heaven
Lodged in a woman's bosom, I account
A glory; not a crime.

*Ros.* Dost thou then add
Insult to perfidy?

*Al.* Thou dost esteem
All homage that to virtue is awarded
An insult to thyself; I know it well:
But what of that? Where I discover worth,
Should I, on this account, esteem it less?
Romilda hates me, this I've heard too clearly,
And with a fresh wound hath she pierced my heart . . .
Hence in myself a sorrow do I feel
Surpassing ev'ry sorrow. To the winds
I know my sighs are scatter'd; all my hopes
Are baffled and betray'd: yet not for this
Can I e'er cease to love her!—Thou canst not
Reproach my want of faith; thou knowest well
Where, how, and wherefore I on thee bestow'd it.
Thou knowest well that thou didst there constrain me

Death to receive or give: that thou didst arm
My wav'ring hand with parricidal sword;
Dost recollect? and there, 'mid tears and treason,
Darkness and blood, didst thou, exacting love,
Swear love to me: but say, does love permit
Her oaths to be exchanged where foul revenge
Her altars has erected? That I there
Was criminal, I cannot contradict;
But couldst thou, woman, e'er esteem the faith
Required, and giv'n, at such a dreadful time,
The genuine offspring of a lasting love?
*Ros.* —Yes; I deceived myself: I should have known
That never is the bosom of a traitor
With one perfidious action satisfied.
'Twould have been wiser to avail myself
For my revenge, of thy imperfect courage;
And then the shade of thy betrayèd love
To pacify, by slaying his destroyer.
This was the recompense befitting thee;
Not my right hand, not my imperial bed,
Not a participation of my throne; . . .
And not my heart.
*Al.* Illustrious penitence!
Thou art indeed Rosmunda.—Why not now
That which thou didst not perfectly perform,
Accomplish utterly? Send forth thy spies;
Another Almachilde fix upon;
(There will not such be wanting) let him quickly
Make me the counterpart of thy first lord:
And in the blood of me, thy second spouse,
Tell him to cleanse thy matrimonial sword,
Still reeking with my predecessor's gore.
Not for betraying thee,—that were no crime,—
For having served thee,—a far greater fault,—
I merit, and expect such recompense.
But, while the Heav'ns still keep it in suspense
Which of us two shall first the other punish,
I, by the shade of murder'd Alboïno,
Swear, that Romilda of thy violence
Shall not be victim.—Meanwhile let us try,
Myself, and Ildovaldo, which of her

Can prove himself most worthy; which most burns
With ardent love; which strongest is in will;
Which, to obtain her, will most daring show
In undertaking.

## Scene IV.

ROSMUNDA.

*Ros.* What canst thou accomplish?—
Who ever saw such mad temerity?—
But yet what can he not effect, since I
Have dared myself all military rule
In him to lodge? ... To thee am I then known,
E'en as I am? No, no, thou know'st me not,
Not half my pow'r thou know'st.—And I have loved thee? ...
That love is at an end, and thou shalt see it.—
Rage, hatred, jealousy, and frantic wrath,
And haughty contumely, and mingled passions,
Quit ye my heart! and thou alone, revenge,
Return, return; and make me wholly thine;
Fill me with all thy deity; if I
Have evermore accounted thee my first
And only deity.—But do I spend
My time and rage in inefficient words?
Rather should I anticipate his schemes;
And frustrate all his wicked plans; and first ...
Whom do I see?

## Scene V.

ROSMUNDA, ILDOVALDO.

*Ros.* Here have the Heav'ns themselves
Sent thee to me; come, Ildovaldo, come,
The' avenger of my wrongs: the minister
Of thy eternal joy, and my revenge,
I hope, at once, to make thee. By Romilda,
Loving, thou'rt loved; I know the whole, nor blame it;
But transport inexpressible from thence
Rather derive. But thou dost not yet know
That the perfidious Almachilde, he
For whom thou hast such difficulties braved,

For whom, to-day, confronted death and dangers,
That very Almachilde, to thyself
Ungrateful, and to me, alas, perfidious,
Himself Romilda loves.
*Il.* Ah, miscreant base!
He by my hand shall die.
*Ros.* Nor doth he love her
With lukewarm passion; no; for he betrays
For her each sacred duty: stands prepared
For violence the most extravagant;
He boasts of this excess; and I believe him.
'Tis true Romilda hates him fervently;
'Tis true that she this instant swore to him
Eternal hate; and, in my presence, swore,
At the same time, to thee eternal love;
For thy sake, she profess'd that death seem'd easy ...
But Almachilde, when he heard her words,
Was he discouraged? Rather, he derives
From ev'ry obstacle a fresh incentive.—
Who will restrain him, if thou dost not do it?
I hope to find in thy persisting ardor
A solid hindrance to his base desires:
This to thyself thou owest; and to this
Do my commands excite thee.—I desist
From ev'ry other project for Romilda:
She is no longer Alaric's, but thine;
I will that she be thine. My ancient hate
Yields to this more engrossing enmity;
May she with thee be happy; take her, then;
And from my eyes eternally remove her.
*Il.* Is then Romilda mine? Surpassing joy!
Whence could I not with this arm rescue her? ...
Is she then mine? ...—But who meanwhile fulfils
My unaccomplish'd vengeance?
*Ros.* Go, collect
Thy faithful partisans; arm them forthwith;
Menace, deceive, use force: at all events
Rescue thy lady from the miscreant's hands;
But leave to me the vengeance afterwards.
First let the guilty traitor see his prey
Snatch'd from his grasp: first in his rival's arms

Let him behold her placed; and at the sight
Let him despair, and impotently chafe ...
*Il.* What? Is Romilda in his hands already? ...
*Ros.* He is forestall'd; yet is he not less bold,
Nor less a lover than thyself ...
*Il.* He is
In all things my inferior.
*Ros.* Thou shouldst then
Prevent him, and delude him. To thy choice
I leave all projects; I would not expose
Thy passion to a doubtful issue.
*Il.* Fraud
Is irksome to me; for in fraud alone
Could Almachilde conquer me. Meanwhile
Watch thou o'er him; I to the camp will fly,
There arm my forces, and without delay
Return here to Romilda ...
*Ros.* Quick; dispatch;
Reflect on all things, and for all provide;
And be alike in mind and body arm'd:
Thou'rt a true lover. Go, fly hence, return.

### Scene VI.

ROSMUNDA.

*Ros.* Meanwhile my measures I will here adopt ...—
But, shall I make her happy in her love
Whom I abhor?—Thou'rt not so yet:—still live I.

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## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

ROMILDA, ILDOVALDO.

*Rom.* I've seen Rosmunda. May I think? ... O
Heav'ns! ...
*Il.* All is at length disposed: thou'rt safe already,
Provided that thou wilt at fall of night
To me repair. Scarce from the dreadful palace
Shall we have started, ere we shall discover

A guard of chosen champions; afterwards
All obstacles will vanish *with our progress.*
*Rom.* O thou, my true defender! *Who indeed*
Could have imagined *this?* Where *I expected*
Death, as the least of ills, shall I receive
Life and enjoyment from the same *Rosmunda?*
Say, should my bosom welcome *such a hope?*
We, who erewhile were in the depths of woe,
Are, in a space incalculably swift,
Raised to the pinnacle of happiness?
I join'd to thee? I free? exempt from danger? ...
Can this be true?
*Il.* That I should rescue thee
I was convinced, but in a diff'rent manner:
Yet this involves less danger to ourselves.
In this Rosmunda doth befriend herself,
E'en more than us; she is compell'd to do it.
It grieves me, for the present, to be forced
To drag thee from thy kingdom; but, in safety
Provided that I see thee, hopes I cherish
To reconduct thee in another fashion
One day to thy hereditary kingdom.
*Rom.* Where'er with thee I am, my kingdom lies.
Hence, such my transport, that I scarce believe it ...
But yet such ecstasy scarce counteracts
The new forebodings that assail my heart.
The traitor Almachilde is my lover:
I have not merited *his impious love;*
All unexpected to my *guiltless ears*
It came; but yet I heard *it; nor in him* ...
*Il.* I should have understood *that miscreant better:*
But, for my gifts I swear I will exact
A recompense; the victory, *the realm,*
His life that I defended with my blood,
He shall repay to me. But, for the present,
I ought to shun him, and I will, while thou
Art not in safety.
*Rom.* Ah! thou canst not know
What agonizing wounds my heart *sustain'd,*
In hearing his base words! How all at once
I seem'd to be less worthy of thy love,

When I had pleased a nature so ignoble!
O how I hate him!—But Rosmunda is
The origin of all my wretchedness;
She has oppress'd and laden me with insults,
And evermore degraded me; I feel
An inauspicious presage in my heart,
That she will never, never prove to me
The instrument of safety; well I know
The infinite abhorrence, which, in her,
By her ferocity, her deadly crimes,
And rankling jealousy, is now redoubled:
But all, whate'er they be, all the effects
Of her wild passions, as a lesser ill
I rather choose to bear, than the base love
And insolent addresses of her minion . . .

*Il.* His foolish hardihood shall cost him dear:
Appease thyself; it was no crime of thine
That thou didst hear him.

*Rom.* I, for e'en one moment,
Should ne'er have seem'd accessible to him;
Behold my fault; should never have endured
That he for my misfortunes dared to seem
Impress'd with pity; never should have made him
The witness of my tears; a joy by me
To proud Rosmunda evermore denied.
Often my eyes with tear-drops ill suppress'd,
My heart with sorrow fill'd, the miscreant saw;
Hence rose his boldness; . . . so far am I guilty;
'Tis a disgrace I ever must deplore . . .

*Il.* Leave it to me to make thee glad for this;
Whilst he shall weep for it in tears of blood.
To him who never blamed thee yet, Romilda,
One look of thine, in which thy guileless soul,
And thy most pure and ardent heart, shine forth,
More than exculpates thee.—Let this suffice.
Be thou here ready at the' approach of night
To follow me; of nothing else take thought.
Meanwhile the sight of Almachilde shun;
Thus his suspicions wilt thou best defeat.
Rosmunda equally do thou avoid,
For she, perchance . . .

*Rom.* I understand thee well;
Lest in her bosom for a pitying deed
Remorse arise.
*Il.* Farewell. A longer stay
Our projects may defeat.
*Rom.* Dost thou then leave me? . . .
*Il.* But a short time; and then we ne'er will part.

## Scene II.

ALMACHILDE, ROMILDA, ILDOVALDO, SOLDIERS.

*Al.* Stay thou.
*Rom.* O Heav'ns!
*Il.* Who brings thee here before me?
*Rom.* Circled by soldiers! . . .
*Al.* Whither dost thou fly?
Stay thou. Much have I to impart to thee.
I do not come, although I have the power,
Force to employ against thee: to oppose
Thy force is now my mission. In the camp
Thou hast, by stealth, arm'd thy most faithful soldiers:
Answer me; why? Perchance, on the same day
Wouldst thou defend thy monarch and betray him?
*Il.* That I defended thee, no more recall;
This is the only stigma on my honor;
Do not remember it: if nothing else
Can wash it out, assuredly canst thou,
By such a recompense as thou hast given.
*Rom.* Traitor, dar'st thou, where I am, come in arms,
And feign conciliatory purposes?
*Al.* No, no, I do not feign. Since I have tried
With words in vain, 'tis needful now with deeds
That I should prove to thee my love.
*Il.* Thou base one . . .
*Rom.* And dar'st thou yet? . . .
*Al.* If 'tis your will, ye hear
From me no more the language of a king:
But, if ye do refuse, ye shall be forced
To hear my words. The time is now gone by
For me to moderate my fatal love:
In vain I will'd it; and in vain ye hope it.

I scorn to have recourse, for thy possession,
To circumventive stratagems; yet never,
That others by such means should win thy charms,
Will I endure. Thou mean'st to drag her hence;
This seems to me unworthy of thy valor;
Pursue a wiser plan; I am prepared,
I swear to thee, beneath my kingly power
To seek no refuge.

*Il.* If thou dost not make
Thy ill-gain'd throne a refuge from my rage,
Say, as a refuge from what danger then?
What lying pomp of noble sentiments
Dar'st thou assume, while here on ev'ry side
Begirt with thy vile satellites?

*Al.* 'Tis true
I keep these at my side, lest thou shouldst not
Consent at present to appear my equal.—
These are a monarch's train; this likewise is
A warrior's sword; the sword alone I keep;
These, if thou fear'st not, at one nod of mine
Shall disappear. Bestir thyself: to thee
I give the challenge: let Romilda be
The guerdon of the most successful valor.

*Il.* Do thou then die beneath this hand of mine . . .

*Rom.* Your swords! . . . O Heav'ns! . . . why are ye thus outrageous? . . .
Cease, Ildovaldo; does he merit, think'st thou,
That thou shouldst join with him in single combat?

*Il.* . . . Thou speakest truth. To what indignity,
Heated with rage, would I demean myself!

*Rom.* Canst thou endure the look of Ildovaldo,
Much less the opposition of his sword?
And if untoward fate to thee should yield
The palm of triumph, dost thou fondly think
That I should e'er be thine? Dost thou not know
That I love Ildovaldo more than life,
And that I hate thee more than I love him?

*Il.* Should he, who is most veteran in arms,
Or veteran in treason, gain her? Speak.

*Al.* What? While I make myself thy equal; while
I hold myself in readiness to fight

For that which I could wrest from thee; thou darest
To such a gen'rous challenge make reply
With taunting words?—Thou wilt not be my equal?
Then thou art not so: then to-day, I ought,
As fitting from the greater to the less,
Thy insolence to punish. First by right,
And afterwards by ev'ry other means,
If thou compel me to them, have I fix'd
To gain my purpose: on no terms will I
Romilda yield to thee. I loved her first:
The outrage which my right hand did to her,
My right hand only can repair once more:
I can avenge her; to her ancient rights,
To all her lost possessions, can restore her;
I can do this: and this thou canst not do,
Nor any one but I.

*Rom.* It is most true;
Thou canst add perfidy to perfidy,
And thou alone canst do it. Traitor, go:
Wert thou ungrateful only to thy wife,
More than enough e'en that would be to make thee
Detestable to me. I heed not death:
What do I say? far rather would I go
A certain sacrifice to Alaric;
Far rather here remain a slave, exposed
To the fell malice of my cruel step-dame,
Than e'er as my defender suffer thee.

*Il.* And I profess to thee, that never thou
Didst a more deep opprobrium cast on me,
Than in thy wish to make thyself my equal.
Thou hast not with this foolish love of thine
As yet offended me. Art thou, perchance,
A rival to be fear'd, except, indeed,
The prize disputed be Rosmunda's love?
And she is verily thy counterpart.—
Nor doth thy dark ingratitude inflict
A deeper wound: in this I recognise
In thee a real king.—By hands most vile
Be my head sever'd from my lifeless trunk
On the base scaffold; but to single combat
No longer challenge me; in doing this

Thou dost alone offend me. Have I stain'd
My sword with blood nocturnal, so that I
Could measure it with thine?
*Al.* Enough: too much.
Save with thy tongue thou wilt not combat? wilt not
Receive me as thy rival? As thy king
Thou shalt receive me then.—Arrest him, soldiers.
*Rom.* Ah! no . . .
*Il.* Vile sword, that didst defend a tyrant,
Lie on the earth. My hand, and not another's,
Shall strip me of my arms . . .
*Rom.* Your leader bound
In fetters? Ah, vile sycophants! . . . now hear me;
Suspend . . . P'rhaps I . . . O dreadful state! . . . O hear me . . .
*Il.* What art thou doing? Wherefore pray'st thou thus?—
I love thee; and thou lov'st me in return:
What cause have we to fear?
*Al.* Without delay
From my sight drag him.
*Il.* My sole punishment
Arises from thy presence. Let us go.—
Provided that I never more should see thee,
At once I leave to thee my last farewell,
Beloved Romilda, and the solemn vow
Of love eternal, e'en beyond the tomb . . .

## Scene III.

ROMILDA, ALMACHILDE.

*Rom.* Ah! let me fall exhausted at thy side . . .
I will pursue him . . . Wretch, dost thou prevent me?
At any cost . . .
*Al.* Ah! hinder not, that I,
A little while at least, detain thee here.
*Rom.* O rage! O grief! . . . Permit me at his side . . .
*Al.* Hear me.
*Rom.* Too much already have I heard thee . . .
My lover . . .
*Al.* Thou canst not pursue him now; . . .
But, fear not: I, for liberty and life,

Spite of my wishes, for thyself, perchance,
Preserve him yet. In a dark dungeon he
Shall never be immured: nor shall receive,
I swear, from my hands any injury.
I well remember yet, that by his means
I am alive to-day: he but endures
Transient coercion.—But, . . . O Heav'ns! . . . to suffer
Another thus to seize my only good
Upon the earth, thy precious sight! . . .
*Rom.* Still love? . . .
Ah! why have I not here a sword, to free me
From thy unwelcome words?
*Al.* Ah! pardon me;
I will not utter more. I shortly hope
Amply to rescue from this passing wrong
Thy lover, (envied name!) and hope, at once,
Of what I owe him to discharge myself.
*Rom.* Dost feign humanity? So much art thou
More in mine eyes an object of abhorrence.
What canst thou give? what debt canst thou repay?
Restore our liberty: and never more
Molest our presence, never; the sole gift
Is this, which thou canst yield to me.
*Al.* O never
Can I surrender thee to any one:
But, spite of thy consent, would I possess thee?
*Rom.* So I believe: and shall that ever happen,
While I've a dagger to defend myself?
To cheat me, or to wrest me from my purpose,
In vain thou hopest. With my lover join'd . . .
*Al.* Of him, of me, and of thyself, the mistress
I wish to see thee: in my bosom, fraud
I harbor not. Only prevent not thou
That I exert myself for thee. If I
Already have bereft thee of thy father,
And neither tears nor penitence to thee
Once more can bring him back; I will to-day,
Aught else of which thou hast been robb'd, restore.
Rosmunda is an everlasting blot
On my good fame: in seeing her alone
I feel the' incurable and fest'ring wound

Of dire remorse, within my heart become
More insupportable from day to day:
The bed, the throne, the love of such a woman,
(While I am doom'd to share them,) render me
More guilty in the eyes of other men,
And in my own more vile. The time is come . . .
*Rom.* The time for what? . . . Speak, speak.—O worthy thou
Of thy Rosmunda, nay, far worse than she,
Thou wouldst, perchance, at a command of mine
Thyself destroy her?—Now, thou miscreant, know,
That most intensely as I do detest her,
I rather would on thee, than her, obtain
Meet retribution. True it is, the death
Of my ill-fated father was, at first,
The project of Rosmunda; but, the vile one
Who dared to perpetrate it, who was he?—
Go; for I well perceive, by thy discourse,
That no great stress of words were needful now
To goad thee on to new enormities.
*Al.* I have committed one; but, in my mind,
More than one great and honorable deed
Do I revolve; and it shall be the first
To disencumber my unworthy brows
Of this unlawful crown, and give it thee,
For it is due to thee; whate'er the risk,
Thy champion, the defender of thy rights,
To make myself; beneath thy feet to lay
Prostrate the pride (and be it whom it may)
Of thy oppressor: afterwards, when safe
I shall behold thee on the throne, e'en then
Of all thy vassals to profess myself
The most submissive, the most culpable,
And the most reverential; then to hear
My final sentence from thy lips; to see
(Ah sight of woe!) enthroned, and at thy side,
Thy Ildovaldo, my liege sovereign:
And drag, so long as it seems good to thee,
In desolation my opprobrious days,
The laughing-stock of all; and, 'mid such woe,
Retain no other solace in the world

Than that of seeing thee:—a crime not mine,
As far as in me lies, by means like these,
I shall have expiated . . .
*Rom.* Cease, O cease.
I do not at thy hands require a throne:
Restore to me my lover; he is mine
More than the throne is mine, and more I prize him.
If thou deny this, thou shalt see me fall
By my own hands.
*Al.* —Thy lover then shall be
To me the surety of thy life. I swear
I will inflict on him the direst tortures,
If thou dost turn thy hands against thyself.
Take heed. . . With too much fervency e'en now
I hate my rival: . . . in my breast I bear
A rage too desp'rate: do not add, I pray thee,
Fury, to fury too intense already . . .—
I ask no other boon, than leave to act
An humble instrument in thy behalf;
And, at the cost of my eternal woe,
To make thee happy in thy destiny . . .
And what reward do I require? Towards me
Somewhat to mitigate thy fierce aversion,
And somewhat my own infamy . . . And this,
Whether thou wilt or not, will I perform.—
I fly to consummate my purposes:
Ah! p'rhaps my deeds may greater pow'r possess
To soften thy aversion, than my words.
Meanwhile I leave thee time for meditation . . .
My baseness thou alone canst verify,
By persevering to esteem me base.

## Scene IV.

ROMILDA.

*Rom.* Unhappy I! . . . What evils does he threaten?
To what do hatred and my rage impel me?
He in his fetters holds my love: I will
Save him, whate'er the risk . . . Unhappy I!
I am compell'd to feign with this base monster . . .

O Heav'ns! if he deluded me? . . . I freeze, . . .
I tremble . . . Ildovaldo in the power
Of an offended rival, . . . thou hast not
A sword, with which to die a noble death; . . .
Nor can I give thee one . . . what should I do? . . .
To whom recur for aid? . . .

## Scene V.

ROSMUNDA, ROMILDA.

*Ros.* Where is the traitor?—
With thee erewhile he here held conference . . .
Where has he flown? . . .
*Rom.* Now hear . . .
*Ros.* I have heard all.
In guilty fetters Ildovaldo groans.
Where, where is he, who in my palace thus
Usurps the royal pow'r? Perfidious woman,
He was erewhile with thee . . .
*Rom.* Ah! do thou hear me.
Thou knowest not the whole: his impious views
Thou hast not yet discover'd: to myself
Is ill applied the stigma of perfidious . . .
But yet, deem me perfidious still, if that
In any wise can solace thee; and make
An exhibition cruel as thou canst
Of my devoted person: only now
From his accursèd hands, without delay,
Wrest Ildovaldo; thence . . .
*Ros.* Thou shalt behold
That I will wrest him quickly.
*Rom.* May just Heaven,
If thou dost this, be to thy reign propitious;
And may the mute shade of my murder'd father
No more thy nights disturb; may the new traitor,
Whom thou hast foster'd at thy side, alone
Fall victim to his own atrocity.
But, if 'twould be a task too difficult
To loose my faithful lover's impious chains,
At least allow, that in his dungeon he

Obtain a sword, by which to free himself
From the fierce rancor of a cruel rival.
And, at the same time grant, ere he expire,
That he may learn that I defied all force;
That, in myself secure, and worthy of him,
I by no hands, except my own, here fell
Transfix'd; and here, invoking his loved name,
Breathed forth my latest sigh.
*Ros.* Lov'st thou so well? . . .
And is thy love so fervently return'd? . . .
O rage! . . . and I?—Yes, go thou; and ere long
Thou shalt behold thy lover free from chains; . . .
Go; . . . and my presence carefully avoid:
Amply on me art thou avenged already;
I am most wretched, and am I compell'd
To make thee happy . . . thee?
*Rom.* Although thy rage
Alone dispose thee to espouse my cause,
On that account I shall not be less grateful:
Nor will I hide from thee the precipice
Tow'rds which thou art impell'd. Madden'd with love,
Ungrateful Almachilde would at once
From thee thy sceptre and thy freedom wrest,
Perchance thy life: and as a wicked gift
He even dares to offer me . . .
*Ros.* 'Tis thou,
Thou vile enchantress, that hast thus seduced him . . .
*Rom.* Then murder me; and save, without delay,
My Ildovaldo only . . .
*Ros.* For thy sake
Is such commotion raised? . . . Ah! who art thou?
Are thy deserts so great?—O rage! . . . Thou liest.—
And am I doom'd from thy lips to receive
This horrid secret? . . . Must I then by thee
Be saved?—If to thy vows the Heav'ns are kind,
Go thou so far from me that I no more
Tidings of thee may hear: O never, never,
May I behold thee happy . . . Hence, away!
*Rom.* But . . .
*Ros.* Didst thou hear me?

### Scene VI.

ROSMUNDA.

*Ros.* O despair! O death! . . .
And am I then, am I, compell'd to haste
To loose, myself, her lover from his chains?

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## ACT V.

### Scene I.

ROSMUNDA, ALMACHILDE, SOLDIERS.

*Ros.* Art going to the camp?
*Al.* I soon shall thence
Return . . .
*Ros.* And I expect thee from the camp
A conqueror here: here keep for thee thy prey.
*Al.* Time now is wanting to reply to thee.
First would I show myself to Ildovaldo.
*Ros.* Go, fly, and fight: I have myself unloosed
His fetters.—Thou, erewhile, in single combat
Wouldst fain encounter him: but, if his hands
With chains were laden, how could he resist thee?—
Released, already he expects thee; run
To triumph over him.
*Al.* Thy trait'rous arts,
My rival, and the disaffected camp,
All equally I scorn. At length, for once,
Thou hast afforded me a valid reason,
Whence with good right I may appear to thee
A foe avow'd: irrevocably now
Thou hast released me from thy snares.
*Ros.* Now go,
Conquer, return; and menace afterwards.
*Al.* I shall be victor; Heav'n supports my cause:
Who, if I fall, remains to punish thee?

## Scene II.

ROSMUNDA.

*Ros.* Go, go: in Ildovaldo's rage and valor
Far more do I confide.—I, miscreant, grieve
That I have chosen for thy punishment
A far too honorable hand.—But what?
Say, is that punishment accomplish'd yet? . . .
The issue yet is doubtful: and there want not,
Although the men of valor are the friends
Of Ildovaldo, base adventurers
Who, adverse to him, for their private views,
Still to the king adhere?. . . This impious man
Has still a multitude of partisans;
And from the' infatuation of his love
His force and hardihood have both increased. . .
O Heav'ns! should fortune favor his designs,
Always propitious to the criminal?. . .
Ah! let me not delay. . . Blind confidence
Might now be detrimental.—Speedily,
Guards, drag Romilda hither.—From my side
Let her not e'en the distance of one step
Be sever'd now. O precious pledge of peace!
O most prepost'rous origin of discord!
Is she the royal guerdon of the victor?—
If she indeed a royal guerdon be,
Let her come here; to give her, is my province.

## Scene III.

ROSMUNDA, ROMILDA.

*Ros.* Advance, advance, incomparable maiden;
Come; and in safety at my side remain,
While war is waged for thee in yonder camp.
Come near, approach. . . Thou tremblest?
*Rom.* O great Heavens! . . .
Around the city horrid shrieks are heard,
And seem advancing tow'rds the palace gates. . .
But, ah! with what new fury do I see
Thy troubled countenance inflamed?. . . no more

Is it allow'd to me to hope for joy...
Only that Ildovaldo is released...
Ah! may he yet be living!... I beseech thee,
From such a doubt deliver me.
*Ros.* From doubt
Deliver thee, while I myself exist
In deadly doubt? Ah, mayest thou for ever
Drag on a life as horrible and wretched
As these sad hours to me, because of thee!
For thee all rush to arms: a second Helen!
A prize unparallel'd! For thee are shed
Rivers of blood to-day: for thee are husbands
Now perjured; cowards for thy sake are valiant,
And haughty the dispirited.—O thou,
The arbitress of heroes, hither come;
Sit by my side in queen-like majesty;
Now in the camp is battle waged for thee,
That thou mayst have a throne,...or death.
*Rom.* And what?
Wouldst thou deride me still? art thou not yet
With such unnumber'd insults satisfied?
*Ros.* What say'st thou? I alone am here derided:
Of all my fury, of the just revenge
That I against thee cherish, of my deep
Unquenchable mad jealousy, art thou
Prepared to reap the precious fruits: 'tis I
That crown thee with supreme contentment; I
That place thee in thy wish'd-for lover's arms.—
Thou see'st in such a tempest of my heart
What small alleviation words afford.
Me, me thou mockest, and with too just cause.—
I've burst the fetters of thy Ildovaldo:
And his invincible right hand have arm'd
Already with the sword: he now fulfils
My just revenge; and while fulfilling mine...
Thine, thine a thousandfold he consummates.
*Rom.* O may at least that arm invincible
Be now triumphant! Thus canst thou alone
Cancel the stigma of thy former crime.
Yes, now a ray of hope illumes my prospect,

Since in the camp, released from shameful fetters,
My Ildovaldo stands. Ah! may great Heaven
Grant thee a life less troubled...
*Ros.* I survive
To drag along a horrible existence,
Whate'er the issue. In my grief rejoice;
Already over thine have I exulted:
Enjoy that grief, since I forbid thee not...
But p'rhaps... What prayers shall I put up to Heaven?...
I am bewilder'd... Hitherto I know
My supplications have all been for blood;
Yet do I see no blood that can appease me...
And shall another, where I'm cursed, be happy?—
Soon shall we see... But, who approaches here?...
*Rom.* A little armèd band... And Ildovaldo
Is at their head. O joy!...

## Scene IV.

ROMILDA, ILDOVALDO, ROSMUNDA, FOLLOWERS OF ILDOVALDO.

*Rom.* Ah! come; say; art thou
Victorious? am I thine?
*Ros.* Hast thou fulfill'd
The task that I enjoin'd? Hast thou destroy'd
That traitor?
*Il.* I? He is not for my sword
A worthy victim. Almachilde fights
Uselessly in the camp: I have imposed
The task on other faithful partisans
To conquer him; an easy task to them.
Not to a warrior's sword, to a vile axe
His life is due.—On thee I thought alone,
Romilda; and have consecrated first
To thee this sword. Come; let me lead thee now
From these abominable walls. My heroes
And I know how to clear for thee a passage.
Come with mé, thou art truly mine at length.
*Ros.* Stop: she is not yet thine: I bid thee stop:
I should bestow her with my hand.—Romilda,
Mine art thou only, while I hold thee here;

And hence thou shalt not stir.—And thou, O coward,
When I release thee from thy chains, and promise
Whate'er thou wishest in the world, to give thee,
Vile one, dost thou refuse to serve my fury?
Thou shunn'st, instead of murdering, thy rival?
For an unmerited reward, while he
Is living, com'st thou here?
*Rom.* O from her hands
Now drag me quickly, Ildovaldo!
*Il.* Come.
Cease, O Rosmunda; loose her; 'tis in vain:
Thou canst not now suffice to be a hindrance
To her departure hence. Enough of foes
Has Almachilde; in his recreant blood
Others will gladly soil their hands, and soon.
Be not dishearten'd, then, Rosmunda.
*Ros.* What?
Dost think to cheat me?
*Rom.* Loose me...
*Il.* Yield, or I...
*Ros.* I loose thee? no, no, never.—But already
I hear approaching shouts,...fierce and more fierce,
And nearer they approach;...O joy to me,
If thus perchance thy hope may be deceived!
*Rom.* Alas, alas!...
*Il.* Who comes thus arm'd?
*Ros.* O joy!
See Almachilde: I perceive he's victor:
And he, I hope, will punish thee.

## Scene V.

ALMACHILDE, ILDOVALDO, ROSMUNDA, ROMILDA, SOLDIERS, AND FOLLOWERS OF ILDOVALDO.

*Il.* Com'st thou
In quest of me perchance? Behold me...
*Al.* Check,
My heroes, check your swords: we have achieved
Enough of slaughter. Let us now desist
From further violence.

*Il.* It yet remains
For thee to murder me: but first ...
*Ros.* Dispatch him.
*Al.* Hear me, brave Ildovaldo; hear, Romilda.—
Retreat from hence, ye soldiers; I command it.
Here all whom I have sought I meet at once.—
Thou seeest, Ildovaldo, vainly now
Wouldst thou defend thyself against my power:
To ev'ry individual of thy train
I can oppose at least a hundred here.
Thou hast to-day my life preserved; to-day
Life I give thee: more, thou deservest not.—
I will that thou, Romilda, be alone
The arbitress of thy own destiny;
The mistress both of us, and of that woman.
Thou see'st now clearly whether I have sought
To plot against thee.
*Ros.* She my mistress? Mine?
Into her breast I'll plunge at once this dagger ...
*Il.* Ah! stop ...
*Al.* Desist ...
*Ros.* Let no one dare approach,
Or I at once the dagger plunge.
*Rom.* And plunge it:
Thus Ildovaldo's I at least shall die ...
*Ros.* Now, which of us is mistress here?
*Al.* Thou ... thou ...
Ah! cease ...
*Il.* O Heav'ns! ... Distraction! ... O Romilda!
And cannot I deliver thee? ...
*Ros.* O thou
In name alone a king, that sword surrender.—
*Al.* Behold me weaponless ...
*Ros.* From forth the palace
Dismiss now all thy soldiers.
*Al.* Go, disperse,
Make haste, all, all ...
*Ros.* And thou, who didst refuse,
Cold lover, with a crime to gain thy mistress,
Dismiss thy troops at once.

*Il.* See, they have gone ...
*Ros.* So far, well done.—Ragauso, instantly
Hither return, and all my armèd guards ...
*Al.* Come, come, ah quickly, come ...
*Ros.* Behold Ragauso.—
I am, I am, then, here still queen?
*Al.* Thou art,
Thou only. Ah! ...
*Il.* Accomplish thy revenge
On which of us thou first wouldst immolate ...
But, O Romilda! ... Wouldst thou I should die? ...
Behold, I turn the sword against my breast ...
*Ros.* My fury cannot even in your blood
Be now appeased. When I commanded it,
Thou shouldest then have aim'd the mortal blow:
Thou knewest well what blood from thee I sought.
But yet, in time, do I repent that I
To thee, base coward, such a vengeance trusted;—
Or ever placed a confidence in thee,
Thou perjured one.—But, altogether now
In my own hands I hold the punishment:
Yes, altogether.—Thou, in whom are centred
All my aversions, who can satisfy
Their rav'ning turbulence so well as thou?
Thou almost for my fury mayst suffice.
Fool that I was! and would I yield thee up
To thy belovèd lover? Thee reserve
For life, who giv'st to me a thousand deaths?
*Il.* In pity hear me! ...
*Ros.* Tremble.
*Rom.* Ildovaldo! ...
*Al.* Her looks dart death! ... To me that sword ...
*Ros.* In her,
In her I first immerge it. Die.[1]
*Il.* Ah! ... thou
Shalt rather die.[2]
*Ros.* Soldiers, surround them both.
*Rom.* My Ildovaldo ... I ... at least ... die ... thine ...

[1] Stabs Romilda. [2] Rushes towards Rosmunda.

*Il.* I follow ...
*Al.* I'll avenge thee ...
*Il.* To survive thee
Is now impossible.[1] ... Do thou avenge her,...
Thou who remain'st alive...
*Al.* I swear to do it.
*Ros.* The sword I still am grasping; tremble: now
The retribution scarcely is begun,
That in thyself I swear to consummate.

[1] Stabs himself.

VIII.

# OCTAVIA.

## THE ARGUMENT.

AGRIPPINA, the mother of Nero, appointed Seneca, the famous philosopher, as his preceptor in his youth; but he is generally supposed to have encouraged him in many of his early excesses, and certainly did not exercise his authority over his pupil in such a way as to prevent him from becoming the cruel tyrant he is known as in history. His first wife was Octavia, daughter of the Emperor Claudius, who married Agrippina (who afterwards murdered him) and adopted Nero as his heir. Octavia was a lady of noble and gentle character, notwithstanding which he divorced her and married Poppæa, a woman of an ambitious nature. Nero and his two wives, Seneca, and Tigellinus, a vile creature of the Emperor, constitute the *dramatis personæ* in this play.

The opening scene between Nero and Seneca, in which, without explaining his reasons, the Emperor informs his friend and late preceptor of his intention of recalling the banished Octavia, amply exhibits his mean and despicable character. In his succeeding interview with Poppæa, he announces to her, to her alarm, the approaching return of Octavia on the ground of the danger arising from the sympathy felt for her by the people in her exile. When left by him and joined by Tigellinus, Poppæa expresses her apprehension of the results to her of Octavia's return and possible restoration to Nero's favor, and he promises to use his influence with Nero against Octavia. Accordingly, when he sees his master and the latter informs

him of his real intention of putting Octavia to death on her arrival, he perceives the danger of a popular rising, and assures Nero that she had been guilty of unfaithfulness to him with a slave named Eucerus, and that he is prepared to prove it by evidence which will satisfy the public mind and induce the people to consent to her death.

Nero and Octavia now meet, and he charges her with this pretended crime, which drives her to despair and makes her invoke death as her only consolation.

The third act commences with an interview between Octavia and Seneca. She laments her hard fate and confesses that she still loves her late husband, and bitterly feels being supplanted by Poppæa. Seneca tells her that perhaps the people will rescue her, their shouts in her favor being heard in the distance. Nero enters, followed shortly by Tigellinus, who states that the populace insist on Poppæa's exile or death and Octavia's restoration, and that they have overpowered Nero's soldiery. Octavia implores Nero to slay her and to save himself by temporising with the crowd; but Nero despatches Tigellinus to the camp, with orders to bring back the pretorian bands to overawe the people. The act ends with the meeting of Poppæa and Octavia in Nero's presence, when they overwhelm each other with taunts, and Nero darkly intimates Octavia's approaching end.

Seneca sees Poppæa, and tells her that the death of Octavia will only ensure her own destruction, and that Nero's cruel character makes it probable that he will himself destroy her also. Nero enters, and Seneca at length summons up courage to speak to him with the utmost boldness at the imminent and in fact certain peril of his own life (his contempt for which he frequently expresses throughout the play), and tells him that Octavia's death will bring about his overthrow, and that he himself will do everything to ensure that result. Nero is worked up to a violent state of fury. Poppæa, when Seneca has left, offers to resign her seat on the throne, but Nero vows that he will never be parted from her. Tigellinus returns and announces that the pretorians are already gathering against the city.

After a sad soliloquy of Octavia at the beginning of the fifth act, Seneca joins her and tells her that the witnesses brought against her (including Eucerus himself) have one after another denied her crime, although cruelly tortured and then put to death. But Tigellinus comes and announces that fresh charges of instigation to rebellion are to be brought against her. In despair, she asks Seneca to give her the poison which she knows he always carries about with him, concealed in a ring. He resists; she seizes the ring and inhales the poison. Nero, accompanied by Poppæa, arrives in time to witness her death. Nero proclaims the approaching fate of Seneca, who, when left alone, informs the audience that he will forestall it.

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Sismondi objects to this play that it is open to the charge of exaggeration, the vices of the characters being on too gigantic a scale, and he thinks that Nero's mad behaviour is not a fit subject for the drama. Madame de Staël finds fault with the incessant lectures given by Seneca to Nero, though praising the work as a whole. Alfieri mentions in his Autobiography that *Octavia*, which he first wrote in 1780, was "a mere daughter of Tacitus, whom he had been reading over and over again with transport." He commenced versifying it on the same day that he procured the separation of his future wife, the Countess of Albany, from her tyrannical husband, Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender. Cesarotti praises this tragedy highly, though he objects to the manner in which Octavia poisons herself at the end. "Nero," he says, "is drawn with the pencil of Tacitus." In curious contrast is the criticism of Schlegel, who draws an unfavorable comparison between this play and the *Britannicus* of Racine, and observes: "Who can recognize, in Alfieri's blustering and raging Nero, the man who, as Tacitus says, seemed formed by nature to veil hatred by caresses; the cowardly Sybarite, fantastically vain till the very last moment of his existence; cruel, at first from fear, and afterwards from inordinate lust?" (*Dramatic Literature*, Lecture xvi.) The character of Octavia is especially praised by Cesarotti, as a model of virtue and resignation.

He singles out several scenes for particular commendation. Alfieri himself says that all the characters were translated and paraphrased from Tacitus, rather than newly created, and he calls the reader's attention to the undercurrent of *fear* which is "kneaded into every word, every movement, and every thought of Nero," and without which "the natural ferocity of Nero would have brought the tragedy to an end in two acts." (*Parere* &c.)

# OCTAVIA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| NERO. | SENECA. |
| OCTAVIA. | TIGELLINUS. |
| POPPÆA. | |

SCENE.—*The Palace of Nero in Rome.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

NERO, SENECA.

*Sen.* Lord of the world, what dost thou covet?
*Ne.* Peace.
*Sen.* 'Tis thine, if thou destroy'st it not in others.
*Ne.* I should possess it fully, were I not
Bound to Octavia by a hated tie.
*Sen.* But how couldst thou, successor of the Cæsars,
Inherit and increase their pow'r and lustre,
Without Octavia's hand? 'Twas by her means
That thou dost hold this throne: yet in a hard
And unjust exile, this Octavia pines;
She, though thus robb'd of thee, although she knows
A haughty rival clasps thee in her arms,
(Unhappy lady!) loves, adores thee yet.
*Ne.* Grant that she were the instrument to raise me:
She since has proved the instrument alone
Of my misfortunes; yes, and even now,
Since her divorce, her baneful influence reigns.
The faithless people dare espouse her cause,

And speak of her with pity? even dare
Around my very throne to breathe their murmurs?—
I would not only that Octavia's name
Were never loudly thunder'd in my ears,
But that no trembling lips in timid whispers
Scarce audibly dared mutter it around me;—
I am not Nero if I suffer this.

*Sen.* My lord, thou hast not always in contempt
My counsels held. Thou knowest well how I
Boldly, with weapons of sage argument,
Have check'd the ardor of thy youthful passions.
I prophesied to thee shame, blame, and mischief,
If thou persistedst to divorce Octavia,
And from her cruel banishment still worse.
Octavia's image is devoutly cherish'd
In the recesses of the people's hearts;
I told thee this: and added that all Rome
Accounted as unlucky gifts the fields
Of Plautus, and the bloody house of Burrhus,
On her so cruelly expell'd, bestow'd
In melancholy omen: and I said . . .

*Ne.* Amply hast thou exhorted me; but yet
Thou hast obey'd my will.—P'rhaps formerly
Thou taughtedst me to reign; but neither thou
Canst teach, nor man can learn, to be exempt
Always from error. Let it now suffice me,
That Rome has given me a timely warning.
'Twas no light fault that I expell'd Octavia,
For it was never right that she should have
A dwelling far from me . . .

*Sen.* Thou then of this
Repentest? and 'tis true what I have heard?
Octavia, then, returns?

*Ne.* Yes.

*Sen.* Thou dost feel
Pity for her?

*Ne.* Yes: . . . Pity? I feel pity.

*Sen.* And she will be companion of thy throne,
And of thy royal bed? . . .

*Ne.* Within my palace
She'll soon return. The reason, thou shalt see.—

O Seneca, thou wise among the wisest,
In manifold emergencies of state,
More urgent and more difficult than this,
My guide and minister, I flatter me,
Thou wilt not now deceive the constant trust
That I have placed in thee.
*Sen.* Advice from me
Thou only seekest, (ah, 'tis ever thus!)
When in thy heart thou hast already fix'd
The fatal sentence. I guess not thy thoughts;
But for Octavia, hearing thee speak thus,
I tremble.
*Ne.* Tell me: didst thou also tremble
That day when, dragg'd to necessary death,
Her brother fell? And on that day when thou
Didst with thy lips pronounce my haughty mother,
Who was thy bitter foe, as worthy death,
Say, didst thou tremble?
*Sen.* What is this I hear?
That infamous, that execrable day
Dar'st thou recall to mind?—My hands were not
Bathed in that blood of thine; thou drankest it,
I held my peace; constrain'd, I held my peace,
'Tis true; but from my silence I was guilty,
And shall be, while the vital air I breathe.—
Fool that I was! I trusted to thee then,
That Nero thus would with maternal blood
Close his career of blood. I now perceive
This scarce was a beginning.—Each renewal
Of thy fell deeds to me brings tribute large
Of hated gifts, with which, I know not why,
Thou hast o'erwhelm'd me. Thou constrainest me
To take them; price of blood thy gifts will seem
To the malignant people: ah! resume them;
And leave to me my self-esteem entire.
*Ne.* If thou possessest it, to thee I leave it.—
Thou art expert in all the milder virtues:
But, as thou know'st, however plausible,
These virtues are not always fit for practice.
If thou didst wish to keep thy fame untouch'd,
And incorrupt thy heart, why didst thou quit,

For this alluring splendor of a court,
Thy obscure birth-place?—Thus thou see'st that I,
Myself no stoic, can teach thee who art;
And yet my wisdom I owe all to thee.—
Since by thy station here thou hast thyself
Impair'd thy candor; since the name of good,
When tarnish'd once, can never be regain'd;
Thou mayst assist me. Of my former faults
Thou hast diminish'd, or wiped off, the foulness;
Proceed; applaud and varnish o'er my failings;
Thy judgment yet is held in some repute.
Less criminal than other men, the people
Esteem thee yet; thou always art supposed
Over my heart great influence to possess:
In short, thou'rt so install'd within my palace,
That when thou blamest me, thou blam'st thyself.

*Sen.* It pleases thee, I know, that other men
Should bear the burden of thy trespasses:
A load divided thus becomes more light.
Yes, I, though guiltless of thy many crimes,
Bear all their punishment: and thus incur
That royal guerdon—universal hate.
What infamous new task canst thou impose
On me that can increase . . .?

*Ne.* Thou art required
To alienate the people from Octavia.

*Sen.* The people change not, as their masters do,
Their partialities; and ill they feign.

*Ne.* The wise man shapes his language and his deeds
To the occasion: and thou art a sage.
Go; on that day I shall avail myself
Of all thy virtues, whatsoe'er they be,
When I can say the empire is my own:
Meanwhile I am the master of the art,
And thou the pupil, to obtain that power:
See that I find thee pliant to my purpose.
I do not menace thee with death; I know
That death appals thee not; but of thy fame
The small remains with which thou yet art burden'd,
Ah think, 'tis all at my supreme disposal.

I can take from thee more than thou possessest.
Be silent then, and aid my purposes.
*Sen.* Absolute words I hear, and words that breathe
Venom and blood.—But I await the issue,
Whatever it may be.—To thy designs
All my assistance now is vain and guilty.
Who is not well convinced that Nero now
Suffices, unassisted, to shed blood?

## SCENE II.

NERO.

*Ne.* —Thee and thy pomp of simulated virtues,
Proud stoic, I will quell. Till now with gifts
I have contrived to punish thee: I keep
The axe to fall upon thy abject neck,
When to the very refuse of the people
I've render'd thee contemptible.—What now
Is this my absolute tremendous power,
If on all quarters it is thwarted thus
With fresh impediments? I hate Octavia;
Poppæa I adore beyond all words;
And shall I stoop, I, to dissimulate
My hatred and my love? That privilege
Which to my vilest slaves the law forbids not,
Shall the mere whispers of the multitude
Attempt to-day to interdict to Nero?

## SCENE III.

NERO, POPPÆA.

*Pop.* Mightiest of monarchs, source of all my joy,
Oppress'd with care, and banish'd from my sight,
Thou leavest me to bitter anguish. What?
Shall it ne'er be that I shall witness thee
Blest by our mutual love?
*Ne.* I, far from thee,
Am sometimes banish'd by our love, Poppæa;
And by our love alone. Thee I secured
With long and dang'rous toil; to keep thee now
I should assiduously strive: thou knowest,

That even at my very sceptre's risk,
I will that thou be mine . . .
*Pop.* Except thyself,
Who would, who could, dissever me from thee?
Each nod of thine, each will of thine, in Rome,
Is law supreme. Thou, as a recompense
Of my regard, bestow'dst thyself on me,
And thou from me mayst take thyself away;
And as thou canst effectively do this,
So could I ne'er survive the loss of thee.
*Ne.* Take thee from me? Not Heav'n itself could do it.
But popular vile insolence, not yet
Utterly smother'd, dares meanwhile to blame
The' affections of my heart: hence I'm constrain'd
To take preventive measures . . .
*Pop.* And dost thou
The people's outcries heed?
*Ne.* I hope, ere long,
To show how much I heed them; but I fain
Would leave without a head this frantic hydra:
Scarce will its last head tumble on the ground,
Whence Rome derives her hope, ere broken, mute,
Torn, and annihilate, to earth will fall
Her haughty multitudes. Rome has not yet
Discover'd Nero's heart; I from her thoughts
Her fond traditionary tales of freedom
Will utterly expel. Octavia, now
The last survivor of the Claudian race,
Resounds in ev'ry mouth; the multitude,
In my despite, deplores her destiny,
Not from affection: in the people's heart
Love never enters: but the insolence
Of popular licentiousness it soothes
To recollect the weak and idle sway
Of inept Claudius, and to sigh for that
Perversely, which no more they can possess.
*Pop.* 'Tis true; the tongues of Rome can ne'er be silent;
But has Rome any pow'r, except to prate?
Should this alarm thee greatly?
*Ne.* For Octavia
A too auspicious place of banishment

Incautiously I've chosen. For the name
Of Agrippina, the whole armament
Now station'd on Campania's shores, retains
A partial recollection. In their breasts
Desire of novelty, a specious pity
For Claudius' daughter, disaffected thoughts,
And trait'rous purposes, have taken root.
I have ill-chosen such a place of exile,
And should do worse in suff'ring her to stay there.
*Pop.* And should Octavia in thy mind excite
Such keen solicitude? Why not dispatch her
Beyond the confines of thy mighty empire?
What exile can be more secure than this,
If that indeed suffice? What trackless desert
Is so remote that it can sever thee
Too far from her, who dares prepost'rously
To arrogate herself the foolish boast
Of giving thee the throne?
*Ne.* Till she has lost,
Entirely lost, the pow'r to injure me,
In Rome, and in my palace, she will have
A residence least perilous for me.
*Pop.* What do I hear? Octavia come to Rome!
*Ne.* Now hear my arguments . . .
*Pop.* Am I then she? . . .
*Ne.* Ah! hear me . . .
*Pop.* I see all; I understand; . . .
Quickly must I depart . . .
*Ne.* O, hear me now:
Octavia doth not to thy detriment
Return to Rome; but surely to her own . . .
*Pop.* That she returns there to thy detriment,
Quickly wilt thou behold. Meanwhile I tell thee
That not one city, how much less one palace,
While we are living, can at once contain
Octavia and myself. Let her return
Who seated Nero on the world's proud throne;
To make him abdicate that throne she comes.
For thee I grieve, not for myself, ah no!
I am most willing to return once more
To my belovèd Otho. Much he loved me,

And with no lukewarm fondness loves me still:
Ah, that I could contrive to love again
That so devoted lover! But Poppæa
Her heart could ne'er divide; nor would accept
Thy heart divided with her hated rival.
I was enamour'd of thyself alone,
Not of thy throne, and still, alas! I am:
The love, not of the monarch of the world,
But of my much-loved Nero, was to me
An irresistible enticement; then
If but in part thou tak'st thyself from me;
If undividedly I do not reign
In thy great heart, I yield the whole, I yield,
And spurn at all the rest. Alas! could I
As fully tear from my fond heart thy form,
As I now trust to tear myself from thee! . . .

*Ne.* Poppæa, I adore thee, this thou knowest:
With what affection, that which I have done,
And that which I design to do, will prove.
But thou . . .

*Pop.* What wouldst thou? Can I at thy side
Behold that odious rival, and still live?
Can I admit the thought? Unworthy woman!
Who knows not how, who will not, cannot love;
And yet dares feign to love thee.

*Ne.* Tranquillize
Thy mind, thy heart; expel each jealous fear:
But yet respect my sov'reign will. 'Tis now
Impossible that she should not return.
Already she tow'rds Rome advances: here
To-morrow will behold her. Thy repose
Not less than mine demands Octavia's presence:
But why adduce my reasons if I will it;
I, not accustom'd, if my will is fix'd,
To meet with obstacles?—Believe me, lady,
I am not satisfied with such a love
As thou displayest, from all fear exempt.
Who most obey and fear me, know that they
Love me the best.

*Pop.* . . . Alas! my very boldness
Proceeds from the intensity of fear.

O how much mayst thou injure me! Thy love
Thou mayst withdraw from me . . . Ah! rather first
Take thou my life: that punishment were milder.
*Ne.* Poppæa, cease: confide in my fond love,
Doubt never of my faith: but, most of all,
Fear to oppose my will. E'en more than thou,
Her, whom thou call'st thy rival, I detest.
Completely sever'd from her noisy friends,
Thou here shalt see her by my guards surrounded,
No more thy rival, but thy abject handmaid:
And, finally, if I have any skill
In arts of ruling, she herself shall give thee
Over herself complete ascendency.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

POPPÆA, TIGELLINUS.

*Pop.* To-day a common danger we incur;
O Tigellinus, it behoves us then,
To-day, to seek a common remedy.
*Ti.* And what? Fear'st thou Octavia? . . .
*Pop.* Certainly
Not for her beauty; hitherto has mine
Prevail'd in Nero's eyes: I fear indeed
Her feign'd affection, her feign'd gentleness;
The arts of Seneca, and his reproaches;
The people's violence; and the remorse
Of Nero's self.
*Ti.* He long has loved thee now,
And dost thou not yet know him? His remorse
Springs from an incapacity to injure.—
Believe me now, 'tis but to consummate
A more complete revenge, that he to Rome
Thus draws Octavia. Let there work in him
That innate rancor, fathomless and bitter,
Join'd to his wicked early nuptial hate.
These are our shelter in our common danger.

*Pop.* Feel'st thou secure? I do not.— Thy frank language
Induces me to speak. I know full well
The soul of Nero; of compunctious workings
It is not capable. But terror, say,
Is terror not omnipotent in him?
Who did not see him tremble at the sight
Of his detested mother? He was then
Wholly possess'd with love for me; yet dared he,
While she was living, give to me his hand?
By the mere sternness of his silent scowl
Did not e'en Burrhus awe him? Finally,
Deprived of all his pow'r, and garrulous,
Does not e'en Seneca himself at times
Affright him with his magisterial prate?
This is the sole remorse that he can feel.
Now add to these the uproar of the rabble,
The menaces of Rome . . .

*Ti.* By these, Octavia
The sooner will be dragg'd where Agrippina,
And Burrhus, and so many more have gone.
Suffer that to his ancient enmity
Fresh fears be added, in a breast like his,
To make him anxious for thy rival's death.
He has not yet disclosed to me his thoughts;
But I'm aware that nothing sharpens more
The wits of Nero than his boundless fear.
Rome, calling for Octavia, kills Octavia.

*Pop.* Yes; but meanwhile Octavia may usurp
A transient glimm'ring of capricious favor.
Octavia hates us both: what would defend thee
From such effective wrath? The hesitating
And frail reluctance of a trembling lord?
One single instant may alone suffice
To lose us both; what consolation then
To us, if we are doom'd to fall the first,
That she fall after us?

*Ti.* O, do not fear,
That she'll secure e'en a brief flash of favor.
The way to Nero's heart Octavia knows not.
Her weak parade of austere virtue frets him;

Obedience, love, timidity, in her,
Alike displease him; and that very bait
With which by us he's caught, in her he hates.—
But yet, if I can any thing perform,
What ought I now to do?
*Pop.* Sagaciously
Explore, and warn me of, the smallest trifles;
Exert keen foresight; to his rage bring fuel;
Invent contrivances, propose to Nero
A thousand, for the ruin of my rival;
Tax her with faults where she has none; in short,
As far as thy dexterity suggests,
Apply a thousand means; go, come, assail him,
Work on his passions, blind him; and watch always:—
This shouldst thou do.
*Ti.* This will I do: but doubt not
That the best instrument for such effects
Is Nero's own dark heart: he in the lore
Of vengeance is a master: and, thou knowest,
If others show in this an equal skill,
He is incensed.
*Pop.* That all conspires to swell
His rage, I know full well. With my excess
Of love erewhile he reprimanded me;
And spoke to me already of the throne
Like a ferocious despot.
*Ti.* Take thou heed
Not to provoke him ever: o'er his heart
Thy pow'r is great; but impulses of rage,
Intoxication of supreme command,
And a fierce thirst of vengeance, can control,
Far more than love, the workings of his heart.
Depart: he's wont to speak with me alone
Just at this hour of day: thy interests
Implicitly confide to me.
*Pop.* I swear,
That if in this thou serve me, none near Nero
Shall equal thee in favor and in power.

## Scene II.

TIGELLINUS.

*Ti.* 'Tis certain, if Octavia triumph'd now,
That fatal loss would thence result to us;
But Nero's self assures me. Too intense
Is his disdain; Octavia's innocence
Too manifest; no refuge has she left.—
Yet I'm constrain'd to summon up to-day
All my dexterity: I must persuade him
That all his fear is provident precaution;
And make him fancy that the guiltiest vengeance
Would be pronounced, by sages even, just.—
Lord of the world, I hold thee; I alone
Hold thee, and absolutely. To myself
Shall it belong, now to intimidate,
And now encourage thee. Woe, if thou lose
This salutary fear! To evil deeds,
What further impulse; or to virtuous deeds,
What further hindrance would remain to thee?

## Scene III.

NERO, TIGELLINUS.

*Ti.* Great master, why didst thou not come before?
Thou wouldst have heard the sobbings of a lady
Who loves thee too intensely. In the bosom,
The true and tender bosom of Poppæa,
A conflict fierce, doubt, fear, and love, have waged.
A lady who adores thee so, canst thou
Thus cruelly afflict?
*Ne.* She will not see,
Blinded by unjust jealousy, the truth.
I love her only . . .
*Ti.* This I've said to her;
But who could better calm the bitter pangs
Of jealous fear than a belovèd lover?
From her, ah hide, in pity to her sex,
That dreadful majesty, which in thy face
Conspicuous shines. Thou with a word, a smile,
A look, canst calm the tempest that assails

Her trembling heart. I, in thy name, have dared
To swear to her, that in thyself the thought
Hath never enter'd to abandon her;
That, though I know them not, for mighty reasons,
Thou hast Octavia summon'd here to Rome;
But never to Poppæa's detriment.
*Ne.* My excellent interpreter, for me
The truth thou swaredst. This I also swore
To her; but deaf she stood. What use are words?
The day that rises, will, perchance, scarce be
Completed, ere Octavia's destiny
Shall be decided, and for ever too.
*Ti.* If thou wilt only to the people show
Octavia's guilt, in all its magnitude,
All other matters will at once be settled.
*Ne.* As guilty as 'tis possible to be
Is she, since I abhor her. Is it needful
That I by proofs legitimate my will?
*Ti.* 'Tis but too needful. Thou canst not yet hold
The impious multitude in the contempt
Which it deserves. 'Tis true, it held its peace
At Agrippina's and at Claudius' pyres:
That of Britannicus it saw in silence:
Yet at Octavia's fate it dares to-day
Murmur and weep. Reveal Octavia's crimes,
And all men will be mute.
*Ne.* I never loved her;
She evermore displeased and wearied me;
She had the boldness to lament her brother;
I saw her too implicitly obey
Turbulent Agrippina; oft to me
I heard her name her sceptred ancestors:
All these are crimes indeed; and they suffice.
On her already have I sentence pass'd;
To execute it, there is nothing wanting
Except her presence. That she is no more,
Rome shall discover: this is the account
Which of my purpose I shall give to Rome.
*Ti.* My lord, thou mak'st me tremble for thyself.
It is not prudent in thee thus to brave
The boiling people. If thou canst on her

With justice death inflict, why wouldst thou now
That she of thy despotic will alone
Should seem the victim? Were it not more wise
Of her authentic crimes to drag to light
The most enormous? And to prove her guilty,
As she in fact is guilty, while esteem'd
Reproachless?

*Ne.* Other . . . more enormous . . . crimes? . . .

*Ti.* No man presumed to mention them to thee:
But should they be conceal'd from thee, since now
She is, by her legitimate divorce,
No more thy consort? The unworthy one
Yet held her station in thy court; with thee
Yet shared thy bed and throne; and yet usurp'd
The homage due to an imperial princess;
When lower than the most abandon'd woman
She had herself degraded; when, alas!
She had conceived the thought to prostitute
To a vile minstrel, who had caught her eye,
Her noble blood, her honor, and herself,
And her imperial ancestors . . .

*Ne.* Vile daring! . . .

*Ti.* The slave Eucerus pleased her; hence she bore
Her banishment from Rome, and her divorce,
With so much resignation. He sufficed
Amply to compensate for Nero's loss;
Companion, and inseparable solace,
He, of her exile was; . . . why call it exile?
The soft Campania, exquisite retreat,
In their voluptuous baseness shelter'd them.
There on the flow'ry turf, or on the brink
Of crystal stream, she listen'd to the notes
Now drawn in symphony from the sweet lyre
By his effeminate hand, in concert now
To his melodious voice: hence she resign'd
The dazzling splendor of her former state
Without regret.

*Ne.* Could any one belie
The blood of Messalina, who her birth
From her derived?—Now say: could proofs be brought
To certify the deed?

*Ti.* Yes; to this fact
Are more than one of her attendants privy;
And, if appeal'd to, would depose the truth.
If e'er Octavia had possess'd thy love,
I ne'er had spoken thus. What do I say?
Had she possess'd, had she deserved, thy heart,
Such an offence could she have e'er imagined,
Much less have perpetrated? To thy arms,
Reasons of state, in spite of thy dislike,
At first consign'd her. Well she knew herself
Of thee unworthy; hence her abject heart
Thus abjectly she fix'd.
*Ne.* But yet I fear
That if I dragg'd to ignominious light
This obscure crime . . .
*Ti.* Theirs is the infamy
Who did the crime.
*Ne.* 'Tis true . . .
*Ti.* Thus their deserts
Will all obtain: she that of culpable;
Thou that of just; and so thou mayest be,
Without incurring risk.
*Ne.* —Thou speakest wisely.
Apply thyself to this, without delay.

## Scene IV.

SENECA, NERO, TIGELLINUS.

*Sen.* My lord, already hath Octavia pass'd
Thy royal threshold: whether I to thee
Bring unpropitious or propitious news,
I cannot tell. But no one emulous
Of such a task, anticipates my coming:
A luckless omen this.
*Ne.* Go, Tigellinus;
My orders execute:—and thou, retrace
Thy previous footsteps; meet Octavia, tell her
That I await her coming here alone.

## Scene V.

NERO.

*Ne.* Guilty, and greatly guilty, is Octavia;
What doubt is there of that? I grieve alone
That I suggested not this project first
Thus to convict her. Can it then be true,
That Nero must from others learn the art
To crush an enemy?—The day soon comes,
When, to get rid of those whom I abhor,
A signal from my throne will be sufficient.

## Scene VI.

NERO, OCTAVIA.

*Oct.* In the deep horrors of a gloomy night,
By armèd guards surrounded, I am dragg'd
Into this very palace, whence I saw
Myself, two months ago, by force removed.
May I presume now of my lord to ask
The cause of this?
*Ne.* —For lofty purposes
Our parents join'd us in connubial ties
From our most tender years. Yet since that time
I never saw thee, as thou wert in words,
Conformable in actions to my will:
For a long time thy contumely I bore;
And should, perchance, have borne it longer, hadst thou
Made me the father of a royal offspring,
Num'rous and lovely; in whose cheering presence
I might have found some solace to my cares.
I hoped for this in vain; a sterile plant,
By thee the throne remain'd devoid of heirs;
Through thee I lost the happy name of father.—
Hence I divorced thee.
*Oct.* Thou in that didst well;
Provided that another happier consort
Than I, alas! e'er was, could render thee
The joyful father of a num'rous offspring.
I know thou hast not found, nor e'er wilt find,
One who, as I love, loves thee. What of this?

Have I perchance e'er murmur'd at thy will?
Seeing my husband in another's arms,
I've wept; and still I weep. Except my tears,
And silence, and obsequiousness, and sighs,
Has aught been heard from me?
*Ne.* Perpetual sweetness
Dwells on thy lips; but not within thy heart.
Thy words betray thy rancor: ill thou hidest
The anger thou conceivest in thy breast
Against Poppæa; and far less hast thou
Conceal'd thy other proud remembrances
Of unauthentic rights.
*Oct.* Ah, couldest thou
Also forget, as much as I forget
These not imaginary rights of mine,
Since no imaginary ills they cost me! . . .
Hatred and fury glisten in thy eyes?
Ah! I too plainly see that thou dost hate me,
More vehemently hate me, than a husband
For mere sterility could hate a wife.
Unhappy woman that I am! I most,
When most I love thee, have offended thee.
What have I ask'd of thee? What ask I now?
A life obscure and solitary too,
And liberty to weep.
*Ne.* And I, indeed,
Assured that thou wouldst in a life obscure
Be better satisfied, to thee prescribed
That life; but afterwards . . .
*Oct.* But afterwards
Thou didst repent of this: didst feel remorse
Since I was not sufficiently unhappy.
Thou wishest me to live a witness here
Of thy new ties: thou wishest me to be
The handmaid of thy consort; to the world
A laughing-stock; derision of thy court.
Behold me, then, submissive to thy will:
What should I do? Speak. Issue thy commands.—
Yet even in thy court entirely wretched
Thou canst not make me, if with my misfortunes
I satisfy thy heart. Say: art thou happy?

Reigns in thy heart a placid calm? Dost thou
Beside another spouse that tranquil sleep,
Of which thou robbedst me, securely taste?
Does that Poppæa, whom, like me, thou hast not
Robb'd of a brother, more than did Octavia
Ensure thy happiness?
*Ne.* At what a price
Thou ought'st to hold his heart who rules the world,
Thou never knewest; and Poppæa knows.
*Oct.* Poppæa knows how to esteem the throne,
To which she was not born: I to esteem
Thyself: nor can she ever try to cope
With me in loving thee. She has, 'tis true,
Obtain'd thy heart; but I alone deserve it.
*Ne.* No, no, thou canst not love me.
*Oct.* Rather say,
That I ought not to love thee: but from thine
Thou canst not judge my heart. I know, that now
The blood from which I spring, except in me,
Is everlastingly extinct; I know
That in my heart, thy image, with the blood
Of all my family contaminate,
Ought never to have found a place: but this
Is force of destiny.—Now, if my brother,
My father, slain by thee, I ne'er remember,
Dar'st thou allege against me as a crime
That brother and that father?
*Ne.* As a crime,
The vile Eucerus I allege against thee . . .
*Oct.* To me? . . . Eucerus! . . .
*Ne.* Yes; to thee, Eucerus:
The lover thou deservest.
*Oct.* Ah, just Heaven!
Dost thou hear this? . . .
*Ne.* There are who dare to charge thee
As guilty of disgraceful servile love:
For this alone I bring thee back to Rome.
Prepare thyself for which thou likest best,
Or to refute it, or to suffer for it.
*Oct.* O unexampled, horrible imposture!
Where is the infamous accuser? . . . Ah . . .

Fool that I am, what questions do I ask?—
Nero accuses, judges, and condemns.
*Ne.* Behold thy boasted love! Yes, yes, the poison
At last flows freely from thy bursting heart;
Now that I have, at least in part, discover'd
Thy secret turpitude.
*Oct.* Unhappy I!...
What more remains for me? Driv'n from my bed,
My throne, my palace, and my country; this
Suffices not?... O Heav'ns! my fame alone
Remain'd to me entire; alone consoled me
For ev'ry ravish'd good: this precious treasure
In vain, by her who lightly prized her own,
Was seen with envy: now, before my life,
My fading life is gone, my fame is tarnish'd?
Haste, haste, O Nero, why dost thou delay?
Peace, (if that blessing ever can be thine,)
Peace, I know well, thou never wilt enjoy,
As long as I exist: can the means fail thee,
To slay a helpless and a friendless woman?
Within the deep recesses of this palace,
The fatal dark abode of fraud and death,
Drag me at will; and let me there be slain.
Moreover, thou thyself mayst with thy hands
Cut short my life: not only will my death
Please thee, but it is necessary now.
Ah, be appeased then with my death alone.
All other slaughter of my friends already
I have forgiven thee; I now forgive
The slaughter of myself; yes, kill, reign on,
And kill again: thou know'st all means of death;
Already Rome is skilful in the art
Of placing colors on thy vengeances:
What dost thou fear? In me of all the Claudians
The last survivor dies; all the remembrance,
And all the love the people ever bore them.
The gods are now accustom'd to the fumes
Of thy ensanguined incense; at their altars
Still the memorials hang of ev'ry death;
And private massacres have been to thee
As trophies and as triumphs.—Let my death

Suffice then to appease thee: why allege
A wicked stain, when I but ask for death?
*Ne.* —For thy defence I wholly yield to thee
This dawning day. If thou not guilty art,
'Twill give me joy.—My hate thou need'st not fear,
But thy own crime, which far surpasses it.

### Scene VII.

OCTAVIA.

*Oct.* Unhappy I!... Ah cruel Nero, fed,
For ever fed with blood, yet always craving!

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## ACT III.

### Scene I.

OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Oct.* O Seneca, approach; let me at least
Shed tears with thee: I've none to weep with now.
*Sen.* Lady, and is it true? This infamous
And lying accusation...
*Oct.* Save this last
Dire outrage, all from Nero I expected;
And this alone increases all my suff'ring.
*Sen.* Were ever folly and atrocity
So mingled in fatuity of guilt?
Thou paragon of innocence and faith,
Thou modest, gentle, and compassionate,
Thou, though accustom'd to consort with Nero,
Pure and unspotted; shalt thou of thy fame
Be thus despoil'd? O no, it shall not be!
I'm living still, the living evidence
Of all thy virtue; Rome shall hear me yet
Proclaim thee innocent with my last breath:
What heart so hard as not to pity thee?
Ah! tell me not (what words can ill express)
How bitter are thy tears: I feel it all,
And share thy grief...

*Oct.* But thou dost hope in vain.
Nothing, till he has robb'd me of my fame,
Does Nero deem that he has taken from me.
All at his mercy lies: thyself wouldst share
Ruin, and all in vain: ah! thou indeed
Makest me tremble for thyself. But yet
Thy fame beyond the reach of man is placed
By the long series of thy virtuous deeds:
Ah, were it so with mine!... But young, a woman,
In a flagitious court brought up, O Heavens!
Guilty I may be deem'd of shameful crimes.
The world believes not, nor should it believe,
That I preserve a love for Nero still:
Yet though a thousand times in thousand forms
He has infix'd the dagger in my breast,
Still is the seeing that he loves another
The grief surpassing ev'ry other grief.
*Sen.* Nero still spares my life: I know not why;
Nor do I know what destiny of mine
Withdraws me from the track that Burrhus trod,
And a few others eminent for virtue,
Whom he has slain. Yet Nero, though he spare,
Has not yet cancell'd from his book of death
Seneca's name. Already had my hand
Cut the precarious thread of my frail life;
Had not the hope restrain'd me (ah, deceived,
And scarce remaining hope!) that I one day
Might reconduct him to the path of virtue.—
Yet, at the risk of this poor span of life,
At least I hope to rescue from his hand
Some innocent. Ah, mightest thou be she!
O might I spare thee infamy at least!
Having done this, O how exultingly
Should I expire!
*Oct.* ... At once I laid aside
All thoughts of life when I these thresholds pass'd.
Not that I fear not death; whence should I gain
Such strength of mind? 'Tis true, I fear to die:
And yet I wish it; and, with anxious thought,
I turn to thee, thou master in the science.
*Sen.* Ah!... think... Thou tear'st my heart...

*Oct.* Thou canst alone
Deliver me; from infamy at least...
Infamy! now thou seeest whence it falls
On me: Poppæa dares impute to me
The most disgraceful love.
*Sen.* O worthy spouse
Of cruel Nero!
*Oct.* Virtue certainly
Does not enamour him: audacious, free,
And overbearing manners, act on him,
At once, as an incentive and a yoke;
Tenderness wearies him. I did my best
To please him; I respected, as a law,
His smallest intimation: and held sacred
His ev'ry wish. Clandestinely I wept
My murder'd brother: for that act of his,
If Nero from my lips obtain'd no praise,
Censure he never heard. I wept in silence;
And feign'd to think him guiltless of that blood:
But to no purpose. 'Twas my cruel fate,
Whatever I attempted, to displease him.
*Sen.* Could Nero ever love thee if thou wert not
Impious and cruel?—Calm thyself a little.
The day now dawns. Soon as the multitude
Of thy return shall hear, 'twill wish to see thee,
And give thee proofs of its entire attachment.
From it I draw much hope; at thy departure
Its outcries were most turbulent; nor ceased
In thy short absence discontented whispers.
Greatly depraved, but still more greatly fearful,
All that he would do, Nero dare not do;
He fears the people. Fierce and proud is he;
Yet hitherto the throne beneath him totters:
And p'rhaps one day...
*Oct.* What noise is this I hear?...
*Sen.* Methinks the people...
*Oct.* They approach the palace...
O Heav'ns!
*Sen.* The cries of an insurgent people
I surely hear.
*Oct.* Alas! what can it be?

*Sen.* What fearest thou? We are the only persons
Who in this dreadful palace need not tremble . . .
*Oct.* Louder and louder does the tumult swell.
Unhappy I! P'rhaps Nero is in danger . . .
But whom do I behold?
*Sen.* Nero; he comes.
*Oct.* In his ferocious and ensanguined eyes,
O, with what rage he burns!—I tremble . . .

## SCENE II.

NERO, OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Ne.* Who,
Perfidious woman, who art thou, that thus
All Rome is up in arms at thy return;
And dares to shout thy name? What dost thou here?
What plottest thou with that pernicious traitor?
Ye both are in my pow'r. The foolish people
In vain demands to see thee. Ah! I hope,
At least, if I am forced to it, as thou
Deservest to be shown, to show thee; dead.
*Oct.* Dispose of me, O Nero, as thou wilt.
But of each popular commotion, ah!
Believe that I am innocent. I ask not,
(I swear to thee) I neither ask, nor hope,
Aught from the people's love: in spite of me,
When it might injure thee, do thou prevent
That which is not my error, by my death.
*Ne.* I would that ev'ry one, before thou'rt punish'd,
Should know thee as thou art, a malefactor.
*Sen.* And dost thou hope the people to deceive
With such a base untruth?
*Ne.* Thou also, thou,
Thou cowardly fomenter of disturbance,
Which thou thyself avoidest; occult source
Of these rebellious movements; thou shalt be
Some day the puny victim of my vengeance.

## Scene III.

TIGELLINUS, NERO, OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Ti.* My lord . . .
*Ne.* What bring'st thou, Tigellinus? speak.
*Ti.* More and more fervently the tempest rages:
Thy judgment must apply the remedy.—
Scarce heard the people that a sov'reign mandate
To Rome recall'd Octavia, than each one
Is emulous to see her. Foolishly
They deem that thou hast changed thy first resolve:
And there are some who say that thou again
Hast in thy bed received her. Wild with joy,
Some in the capitol prefer their vows;
On the neglected statues of Octavia
Others replace triumphal crowns of laurel:
Others, with transport drunk, dare to cast down
Those of Poppæa: their audacity
So far has risen, that, 'mid cries and shouts,
Dragg'd in the dust and filth indignantly,
Broken they lie. With epithets of scorn
They execrate her name: and to the skies,
Nero, with acclamations loud, extol:
The greater part demand Poppæa's exile:
And some, more cruel still, demand her death.
Triumphant hymns, and threat'nings, thou wilt hear;
Then prayers, then threats again, and prayers once more.
Each bosom burns; authority is fled.
The soldiers and commanders tried to stem
The irresistible, impetuous torrent;
In vain they tried; a moment saw them all
Confused, dispersed, discomfited, or slain.—
What shall we do? What is thy sov'reign will?
*Ne.* What shall we do? . . . The people must behold
This their Octavia:—Let her then be slain.
*Oct.* See my defenceless bosom: if it please thee,
Slay me at once. Ah, may my blood appease thee! . . .
Show me when dead to the excited crowd:
Thou wilt at once, by doing this, repress
All culpable rejoicing. Let the urn,—
This is my sole request,—receive my relics,

That holds the ashes of Britannicus.
So may thy throne find in our monument
A sacred and an everlasting base.
Why dost thou now delay? receive my life;
I owe it to thy fury.
*Sen.* If at once
Thou, Nero, wouldst lose both thy throne and life,
Certain the method is; Octavia slay.
*Ne.* On her at any cost I would take vengeance.
*Oct.* Not only one death, I would have a thousand,
Ere the least detriment I caused my lord.
*Ti.* But the time presses more and more. Hear'st thou
Those savage howlings? I have never seen
So furious an attack; and so much less
Surmountable, as 'tis the child of joy.
'Tis needful to decide.
*Oct.* Can it be doubtful?
Nero, henceforward, to prevent all tumult,
'Tis indispensable to slay, or love me:
The one, thou couldst not even feign to do;
The other, for a long time thou hast wish'd:
Take courage, then; destroy me; be thou bold:
Or if this be not the propitious moment
For such decision, temporise awhile;
Thou easily mayst do it. Credulous
The people are, and if their sudden movements
Be from their channel turn'd, their force is lost:
This will be easy; 'twill alone suffice
That I with placid looks present myself,
As though I to thy favor were restored:
That I but feign that I am thine. The crowd
Will thus be soon dispersed; all tumult quell'd;
Thus to unsheathe thy sword wilt thou gain time,
And to mark out thy victims.
*Ne.* Yes, to Rome
Will I present thee: but will first discover
Whether I am in Rome the real master.—
Thou, Tigellinus, to the camp repair;
In silence the pretorian bands assemble;
Then with a fearful, unexpected force
On the delinquents fall; and by the death
Of whomsoe'er thou meetest, mark thy steps.

*Ti.* I will attempt it; though the consequence
Be most precarious. 'Twill, indeed, appear
A harsh expedient to repress with swords
A sudden gust of joy. And should it turn
To indignation? brief is the transition.—
'Tis no light task to cope with a whole city:
Suppose that with my partisans I fall;
Who then remains in thy defence?
*Ne.* 'Tis true . . .
But yet to yield would seem . . .
*Ti.* Now trust to me:
Do not incur a mighty danger lightly:
Thy single presence might perchance at once
Disperse them all.
*Ne.* . . . The guardian of Octavia,
Here I remain. In my name do thou go,
Show thyself to them: what the people are,
Thou knowest well; to temporise with them
Will be the worst. At thy discretion feign,
Grant, promise, cheat, destroy: and put in practice
Gold, terror, weapons, flatt'ry, menaces,
So that they be o'ercome. Go, fly, return.

## Scene IV.

NERO, OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Ne.* Woe on thee, Seneca, if from this palace
Thou dost attempt to stir: . . . but keep thyself
Out of my sight, that I may not behold thee.
Meanwhile, prefer at will nefarious vows;
Hope and desire; thy day of retribution
Also approaches quickly.
*Sen.* I expect it.

## Scene V.

NERO, OCTAVIA.

*Ne.* And thou, Octavia, this thy final triumph
Fully enjoy; for soon . . .
*Oct.* The day, too late,
Will also come when thou wilt know Octavia.

## Scene VI.

POPPÆA, NERO, OCTAVIA.

*Pop.* Say, Nero: hast thou placed me at thy side,
And on thy throne, that I should be the scorn,
The laughing-stock of thy audacious people?
But what do I behold? while I am thus
The victim of derision, unavenged,
Irresolute, and silent dost thou stand
In presence of the author of thy wrongs?
In truth, fit master of the world is Nero!
Yet notwithstanding does the multitude
Prefer his wife to him.
*Oct.* Thou hast alone
The heart of Nero: what dost thou then fear?
I, a vile prisoner, the hostage am
Of the audacious people's wav'ring faith.
Do thou rejoice: when once all things are calm,
The haughty tears thou sheddest now, will soon
Be in my life's blood dried up utterly.
*Ne.* Soon will thy shameful deeds be brought to light;
The paltry idol Rome will soon behold
Which for herself she raised. Thy outrages,
Poppæa, will to honor be ascribed;
Her honors only to her infamy.
*Oct.* And if there those exist who could convict me,
By fair and open proofs, of infamy,
I have already in my secret heart
Chosen Poppæa as my only judge;
To thee do I appeal. Thou knowest well
What criminality it is to change
The' affections of the heart, what punishment
Those who are guilty of the crime deserve.—
But I am innocent, alas! too much so,
E'en in your eyes. Yes, quit my presence, thou
Who standest here so haughty in thy virtue;
Thou darest not e'en now sustain my looks.
*Ne.* How dar'st thou thus? Respect thy sov'reign's wife;
And tremble . . .
*Pop.* Heed her not. She chooses well

In me her judge: what judge can she e'er find
More merciful? What other punishment
On her who has betray'd my Nero's love,
Can I inflict, than losing him for ever?
What punishment to thee can be more light?
That wicked love, which thou in vain concealest,
Thou hast obtain'd my free consent to publish:
Yes, worthy mistress of Eucerus, I
Would worthily espouse thee to Eucerus.
*Oct.* Alas! Eucerus only is a veil
To guilt compared with which e'en he is noble.
But I with thee contend not: to that honor
I was not born: I am not so audacious . . .
*Ne.* To whom art thou now equal? Thy base flame
Makes thee more vile than e'en the vilest handmaid:
Yes, from thy rank, and from thy noble birth,
Thou'rt fallen utterly.
*Oct.* Thy hate were less,
If I had fallen to the lowest pitch,
Or if thou couldst believe it. But I yield,
If thus thou willest, ev'ry thing to thee,
Except my innocence.—O cruel Nero,
Nor can I cease, whate'er thou art, to love thee,
Nor for that love to blush: immense disgrace,
'Tis true, I feel it to proclaim myself
The rival of Poppæa: but I am not;
She never loved thee: 'tis thy rank, thy throne,
And all the splendor that encircles thee,
All this, not Nero, has secured her heart.
*Ne.* Perfidious woman, now, e'en now . . .
*Oct.* And thou,
When I began to love thee, such thou wert not:
P'rhaps thou wert born for virtue: never, never
Didst thou discover in thy early years
Such dire propensities. 'Tis she has changed
Thy nature, changed thy heart; she has bewitch'd
Thy faculties; she first instructed thee
To thirst for blood; she is the curse of Rome.
My own wrongs I suppress, which are the least:
But by thy means the very Tiber runs
All dyed with blood; and brother, mother . . .

*Ne.* Cease.
Be silent, leave me, or I . . .
*Pop.* Does she merit
The indignation of my lord? Abuse
Is the accustom'd idle subterfuge
Of culprits. If she could offend me now,
Or thou couldst yield belief to what she says,
One of her words alone had wounded me.
What said she? that I love thee not? thou knowest . . .
*Oct.* Better than he thou know'st it: he would know it,
If he should lose the throne: then would he fully
Behold thee as thou art.—Ah why, O throne,
The only cause that Nero hates me thus,
Wert thou my cradle? Ah! why sprung I not
From obscure blood? to thee had I then been
Less hateful, less suspected, less displeasing.
*Ne.* To me less hateful? Thou wert always so;
And now thou art much more so: but, that hate
Will now be transient.
*Pop.* And if I boast not
Imperial ancestors, dost thou infer
My blood is thence obscure? Yet if it were,
'Twere a sufficient solace not to be
Daughter of Messalina.
*Oct.* My forefathers
Sat on the throne; from thence to all the world
Their failings are divulged; but who e'er heard
Of thy obscure and unknown ancestors?
Yet, if betwixt us any one should dare
To make comparisons, could he allege
Against Octavia an exchange of husbands?
Am I perchance the refuse of a Rufus,
Or of an Otho?
*Ne.* For a little while,
Of death art thou the refuse. Now, the mode
Of thy destruction is alone uncertain;
Thou canst but change it for the worse.—Depart;
Meanwhile keep thou to thy apartments: go;
And let me no more hear thee.

### Scene VII.

NERO, POPPÆA.

*Ne.* Learn, Poppæa,
To know thyself, to know thy Nero, better.
Should I abandon Rome to fire and sword,
And should I bury with myself my throne,
I swear to thee, this outrage is the last
That thou shalt bear from her; nor from my hands
Shall she be ever rescued.—Calm thyself;
Resume thy confidence; confide in me . . .
*Pop.* I have no fear, except to die not thine . . .
*Ne.* Ah! cease. The tumult rapidly has risen,
And quickly will subside: I also now
Prepare myself for action.—Be assured,
That thou shalt shortly see me the avenger
Of the indignities which thou hast suffer'd.

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## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

POPPÆA, SENECA.

*Pop.* What wouldst thou of me?
*Sen.* Pardon me, I come
Inopportunely: but, perchance, I come
For thy advantage . . .
*Pop.* Wherefore, now, in thee
Springs such solicitude for my advantage?
Say, wert thou ever, art thou now, my friend?
What other reason than to injure me? . . .
*Sen.* I never would, assuredly, assist thee,
Did not the means of least risk to Octavia,
With means of thy advantage, coalesce.
Compassion for the noble, guiltless lady,
A love of justice, and long weariness
Of a disgraceful and unfruitful life,
Lead me to speak: thy interests, nought else,
To listen should impel thee.

*Pop.* Let us hear:
What canst thou say to me?
*Sen.* That thou wilt soon
Become displeasing to the heart of Nero,
If he perceive the multitude persists
Tenaciously in hating thee. In this
I speak to thee the truth: I know Poppæa,
Nero, the times, and Rome.
*Pop.* Thou knowest all
Except thyself.
*Sen.* Men at my death will see
Whether I know myself. Hear me meanwhile;
Hear me, I pray thee,—To thy own destruction,
With too much wishing to destroy Octavia,
Thou hast'nest now. Rome taxes thee alone
Both with her exile and divorce: to thee
'Twill always be ascribed, if infamy,
Or greater punishment await her. Hence
The hatred of thyself, intense already,
The whisper'd enmity, a thousand-fold
Will be increased. The people, mutinous,
Are not dispersed: yet, grant that it were so:
Will not the day return, in which 'twill be
Still more tremendous? Tremble for thyself,
Poppæa; for thy Nero has a heart,
If self-defence required the sacrifice,
To immolate the whole to save himself.
P'rhaps a light obstacle allures to love;
But quickly one that's insurmountable
Destroys it in a bosom not sublime.
Then, flatter not thyself: for Nero deems
(And for a long time has he deem'd) the throne,
Far, far more precious than thy love, or thee.
And woe to thee, if he is forced by Rome
To choose betwixt you!
*Pop.* And I Nero deem
Far, far more precious than the throne. If I
Fear'd, on my own account, to risk his safety . . .
But, what dost thou suggest? Is Nero not
Absolute lord of Rome? and shall he heed
A vile and apprehensive multitude,

Which silently, implicitly, obey'd
Both Caius and Tiberius? . . .
*Sen.* Thou shouldst heed it,
If thou wilt not that Nero for himself
Should tremble at it. Yes, defy all fear;
Remove the last remaining check from Nero;
And thou of this wilt be the first to feel
The sad effects. All useless is the blood
Which solemnized thy fatal nuptial rites,
If ye dare add to-day Octavia's blood.
Reflect on Agrippina: her fierce son
She loved, but well she knew him; she would never,
From apprehension of his rival brother,
Never exempt him. His ferocious cunning
At last prevail'd; and the unhappy youth
Imbibed the guilty poison in his breast.
Vain were the mother's arts; and soon for them
She paid herself the penalty. From thence
More resolute in crime, we Nero saw
Day after day more deeply plunge in blood.
Octavia now remains to such a monster
The only check; Octavia, Nero's terror,
Idol of Rome. Octavia take away;
Let him possess thee in tranquillity;
Soon wilt thou see him cloy'd. He loves thee now,
Because he purchased thee with so much blood;
But if a danger, though a feeble one,
Thou cost him, love is gone. Ah, then expect
That meed of which was Nero never sparing;
To those who love him most, the death most cruel.
*Pop.* He comes; proceed.
*Sen.* 'Tis what I most desire.

## Scene II.

NERO, POPPÆA, SENECA.

*Ne.* Obey'st thou thus my prohibition, rebel? . . .
*Pop.* Ah come! ah come! and thou shalt hear . . .
*Ne.* Hear what?
Ere long and he shall also hear from me
The self-same arguments which I prepare

For all the people.—But, O rage! E'en yet
That execrable tumult ceases not:
Fruitless are prayers: ere long the sword shall come,
And it shall clear away an ample passage.
Poppæa, calm thy spirits: thou shalt see
Thy images to-morrow rise again
Tow'rds Heav'n: and in the same filth, but bedaub'd
With noisome, sable gore, thou shalt behold
Thy rival's dragg'd.
*Pop.* Whate'er from this ensues,
Let Rome from thee now know that I have not
From thee exacted blood to expiate
This offer'd outrage; though it cost me much
To bear it. Yet the guilty people dares
Allege against me cruel views: and he,
This thy preceptor, dares to second them,
Though he believes them not. Thee I attest,
Thee, my first deity, of this: thou knowest,
If I from thee have ever ask'd for aught
Except Octavia's exile. Evermore
To see her near me, who, without desert,
My Nero first possess'd, afflicted me:
But, with her exile satisfied, I deem'd
That she, for her so many crimes, received,
In losing thee, an ample punishment:
A punishment which I . . .
*Ne.* Let Seneca,
And, with him, let the vulgar prate at will.
Soon by convincing proofs I'll show to Rome
What this her idol is.
*Sen.* Nero, take heed;
It is more easy for thee to alarm,
Than to cheat Rome: the one thou oft hast done;
The other never.
*Ne.* But of thee, thou knowest,
I often have avail'd myself to cheat her;
And thou in this wert tractable . . .
*Sen.* I too
Was often culpable; but I abode
In Nero's court.
*Ne.* Vile slave . . .

*Sen.* I was, so long
As I was silent; now the day has come
When I unloose, to words ne'er heard before,
My tongue, no longer parasitical.
'Tis true, that words will be a poor atonement
For my delinquency; but p'rhaps my fame
May be recover'd by a lofty death.
*Ne.* I will give thee the fame thou meritest . . .
*Sen.* While still I hear the murmurs of the people,
Which by the salutary check of fear
Soften thy fury, thou must suffer me:
Meanwhile my heart exults to irritate
Thy haughty passions; and to make thee hear,
Thus make thee hear, the truth; that when again
Thy courage thou resumest, I shall fall
Its victim first: and, if on me the blow
Of thy revenge first fall not, on Octavia,
I swear to thee, it never shall descend.
The people, stirr'd already, I can raise,
And to more fury I can raise than ever;
I can and will reveal to them in full
Our infamous contrivances: and drag thee,
More than thou thinkest, to the utmost danger.
I was the counsellor of Nero once;
And mail'd my heart for him in his own steel.
I vilely thought, that I might flatter thee,
Or feign'd to think (too much!) that his lost throne
Proved that Britannicus in truth was guilty;
That Agrippina, since she gave to thee
The throne, was guilty; Plautus, Sylla, both
Guilty, in being thought to have deserved it;
And lastly feign'd that Burrhus, too, was guilty,
For having many times preserved it for thee.
But guilty more than all the rest I deem'd,
And still I deem, myself; and will proclaim it,
In life and death proclaim it openly,
To ev'ry creature that my voice can reach.
Satiate thy rage on me; thou mayst securely:
But tremble, Nero, if thou slay'st Octavia:
To thee I now announce it; all her blood
Will fall again on thy devoted head.—

I've spoken; it behoved me thus to speak.—
Thou wilt hereafter in reply bestow
On me, when thou hast greater leisure, death.

## SCENE III.

NERO, POPPÆA.

*Pop.* My lord, appease thy wrath . . .
*Ne.* For words like these
I'll make thee pay ere long.—O rage! . . . O daring!
Am I of all men least, till comes my army?
Of contradictory and diverse schemes
On ev'ry side I have a crowd: and those,
Whom by a sudden blow I fain would crush,
By long elaborate contrivances,
And one by one, I'm forced to immolate.
*Pop.* O what compunction in my heart I feel!
What conflict in myself! Of all thy cares
I am the guilty reason, I alone.
*Ne.* The more thou costest me, the more I love thee.
*Pop.* 'Tis time at length, O Nero, it is time,
That, by myself, a lofty remedy
Should be applied, since I alone possess it.
Ne'er hope the daring people will be tranquil,
While I am with thee. Ah, Rome now disdains
That gen'rous offspring of the mighty Cæsars
Which I shall give her soon. 'Twere better far
That the disreputable progeny
Of an Egyptian slave the' imperial throne
Hereafter should ascend.—A pow'rful mind,
Such as perchance I have not, could alone
Tear up this evil by the roots.—Although
A pretext I afford, and nothing else,
To popular commotions which arise
Elsewhere, yet have I in my heart decreed, . . .
Ah, yes, but too irrevocably fix'd! . . .
I ought to do it, and I will . . .
*Ne.* Ah! cease.
'Twas needful for me to gain time with time;
And somewhat of it I have gain'd already.

What fear'st thou now? Be well assured that we
Shall be triumphant . . .
*Pop.* Ah! permit that I,
If at thy feet I do not now expire, . . .
Give thee my last farewell . . .
*Ne.* What sayest thou?
Arise! I ever leave thee? . . .
*Pop.* What avails it
To feign with me? Do not I plainly see,
My lord, that thou, alone to calm my spirits,
Forcest thyself to hide from me thy fears?
Do not I read thy heart's most secret movements
In thy belovèd face? A woman's eye,
Sharpen'd by love, sees all things at a glance.—
At the audacious popular commotion
Caused by Octavia's coming, thou at first
Wert startled; now thou hear'st their hardihood
Increasing, thou'rt affrighted . . .
*Ne.* I affrighted? . . .
*Pop.* I know thy firm heart still persists in vengeance:
But doubtful are the means: meanwhile dost thou
Remain obnoxious to repeated insults.
Thou wert constrain'd e'en now to hear with patience
The' irrev'rent babblings of a Seneca:
Thou seeest clearly . . .
*Ne.* I affrighted?
*Pop.* Yes;
For me thou art so:—of another fear
Thou'rt not susceptible; thou feel'st alarm'd,
Lest on my head the people's fury fall.—
Couldst thou now love, and not be apprehensive?
For me, 'tis easy from my own distress,
To tell thy state. Distracted by thy danger,
Full of thy image, mindless of myself,
The transient flash of a precarious peace
Suffices not to calm me. To our fears
I wish to put an end, and extricate
Thee from all risk, by my own sacrifice.
For ever will I lose thee, to preserve
Entire for thee the' affections of thy people.
*Ne.* But what? dost think me? . . .

*Pop.* Nero, say no more:
I will, in spite of thee, promote thy good:
I am resolved to abdicate thy throne;
To choose a voluntary banishment
From Rome; and, if need be, from the vast empire.
Her, whom the multitude would now enthrone,
Let her be empress, since the multitude
Is made the arbiter of thy affections:
Yes, let her have the throne, (this is the least)
And also have my Nero's bed and love . . .
Unhappy that I am! . . . Thus wilt thou have
Security and peace.—'Twill be to me
A solace, if a solace I deserve,
And if I cannot, while I live, possess thee,
'Twill be to me an ample solace, thus,
By going, to have snatch'd thee from all danger . . .
*Ne.* To the entreaties of thy consort yield;
Or the injunctions of thy lord respect.
From me thou canst not, no, not e'en thyself
Can take thyself away; except my life
And empire too should first be snatch'd away,
No human force can do it. For my vengeance,
Which ought to be so great, and for the wrath,
The wrath immense which boils within my breast,
The means (I see it plainly) are but slow;
And slower still they seem: but did delay
Ever diminish vengeance?
*Pop.* O believe me,
To save thyself, or to acquire more time,
Is my departure indispensable:
Wouldst thou that I should by constraint depart,
While now I can with a good grace? The people
Menaces even this; and this will be
The mildest of its threat'nings: it pretends
To choose another husband for Octavia,
And that he reign with her. Thus, thou dost see,
Sov'reign arbitrament in her is centred.
Shall I permit thee for Poppæa's sake
To lose the throne? Ah! Nero, take at once
My last farewell . . .
*Ne.* No more: this is too much . . .
*Pop.* And even should the day arrive, when thou

Shalt, o'er Octavia, and the people, gain
The full ascendency, thou wilt incur
Thence, in no small degree, the people's hate.
And then; who knows? thou mightest blame for this
Wretched Poppæa. That which now thou feel'st,
A genuine love for me, who knows, if thou,
Repentant, wilt not then for hate exchange?
O Heav'ns! . . . At such a thought my blood runs cold.
Ah! let me sooner die afar from thee; . . .
But thus, at least, I'll carry to the tomb
Thy love, with me, entire . . .
*Ne.* Let this suffice;
My rage already is too much inflamed . . .
Dismiss all projects of forsaking me.
Rome, and the world, and Heav'n permit it not,
Mine shalt thou always be: this Nero swears.

## Scene IV.

TIGELLINUS, NERO, POPPÆA.

*Ti.* Long live great Nero.
*Ne.* Hast thou slain, dispersed them?
Am I the lord of Rome?—But what? thou comest
With an unbloody sword?
*Ti.* The time for blood
Is not yet come: but hastens on, I hope.
But yet the greatest art is needed now:
Various reports I spread among the people:
Now, that thou p'rhaps didst meditate once more
To reinstate Octavia, if she could
From some aspersions of malignant tongues
Exonerate her fame: now, that the wild,
And frantic insults to Poppæa shown,
Had, even in Octavia's bosom, roused
A noble indignation; and that she
Returns to Rome the harbinger of peace,
Not of disturbance . . .
*Pop.* Thinks the foolish people
That I, for her, feel pity? . . .
*Ne.* Always art,
Always? And ne'er the sword?
*Ti.* The circumstance

The most improbable, sometimes appears
True to the people. At these various tales,
Whether convinced, or wearied, it repress'd,
In a great measure, the extravagance
Of its rebellious joy. Meanwhile the day
Declines; and night's lugubrious shades will be
A signal to far other arguments.
Already the pretorians noiselessly
Have muster'd; many are proscribed already.
The sun to-morrow will arise in blood;
And thence in silence. Yet, if thou dost wish
Complete extinction ere to-morrow's close
Of all disturbances; if thou dost wish
That desolation, long and terrible,
Should, to a false and transient joy, succeed;
Thou art constrain'd now to full light to bring
The heavy accusations urged already
Against Octavia: by another method
Thou ne'er wilt fully consummate thy purpose.
Thou canst not slay them all . . .

*Ne.* So much the worse.

*Ti.* But thou mayst all convince. This, I assure thee,
Is the last massacre where art is needful.

*Ne.* Go, Tigellinus, since it so must be;
And the projected accusation urge
With cautious vehemence. Poppæa, now,
Let us depart; soon shall we both obtain
A perfect triumph o'er this impious woman.
Meanwhile the day will come, when my revenge
Shall be secured without the aid of others.

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## ACT V.

### SCENE I.

OCTAVIA.

*Oct.* Behold, already is the people hush'd:
All tumult ceases; and a silence reigns,
As fall the shades of night, like that of death.
Here I'm commanded to expect my fate;

So wills my lord.—While I thus weep alone,
O, what is Nero doing? In vile revels
Already is he ush'ring in the night.
Feels he in safety then? So quickly? Fully? . . .
And in security he lives! But, prompt
To fear, and prompt to banish fear, he yields
No credit to a distant danger: ah!
May such an error not to him prove fatal!—
Now midst the drunkenness and shameless sports
Of a degrading table, he prepares,
There is no doubt, an agonizing death
For me. Thus did I see my brother slain
Amid nocturnal orgies; written down,
In bloody symbols, at the nightly banquet,
Was Agrippina's fate: the trembling limbs
Of his own family, are now become,
At his glad feasts, the most delicious food.—
But, the time passes; no one yet approaches, . . .
And I know nothing . . . Can e'en Seneca
With all the rest abandon me? . . . Perchance
He breathes no more . . . O Heav'ns! . . . and he alone
Pitied my suff'rings . . . Nero p'rhaps on him
Has wreak'd his fury . . . But, O joy! He comes.

## SCENE II.

OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Oct.* O joy! art thou then living, Seneca?
O come, my more than father . . . What is this?
Thou wear'st a less dejected countenance:
What tidings dost thou bring me?
*Sen.* Unaspersed,
Enjoy for evermore thy innocence.
Thy unexampled goodness with its warmth
Has touch'd the basest and most servile hearts,
Inflaming them to virtue. 'Mid the pangs
Of the most cruel martyrdom, thy maidens,
All, with one voice, the fancied crime denied.
Distinguish'd by her firmness from the rest,
Marcia, with masculine and free-born aspect,
(Enough to make us trembling slaves ashamed)

Fixing on Nero her undaunted looks,
Now Tigellinus, and now Nero, she,
With a loud voice, alternately proclaim'd
As wicked liars: full of gen'rous rage,
Triumphantly she chanted solemn hymns,
Commemorative of thy holy virtue,
'Mid torments seem'd incapable of pain,
And thus heroically breathed her last.
*Oct.* Ah victim, worthy of a better fate! . . .
But what boots this? What blood can now suffice
Mine to redeem?
*Sen.* More difficult than ever
Will Nero find it now to spill that blood.
Thou hast gain'd fame and honor, where the tyrant
Hoped to draw on thee infamy and death.
Even Eucerus his approaching fate
With benedictions hail'd. Now horrid oaths,
By which his head to the infernal gods
He consecrates; now free ferocious words,
He utters, which attest thy innocence;
And now he swears that ropes, and swords, and axes,
To him are far more welcome, than the gold
Which, as the price of calumny, was proffer'd.
To ev'ry man around him he reveal'd
The ineffectual bribes of Tigellinus;
The very executioners themselves,
Smitten with unaccustom'd horror, listen'd,
Spite of themselves, and e'en withdrew their hands.
These grateful tidings to impart to thee
Swiftly I came.
*Oct.* See, who approaches now:
See him, and hope.
*Sen.* O Heav'ns!

## Scene III.

TIGELLINUS, OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Ti.* Thy lord and master
Sends me to thee.
*Oct.* Ah! bringest thou my death?

Now that my innocence is proved, 'twill be
To me acceptable.
*Ti.* Thy lord as yet
Holds thee not guiltless; and to make thee so,
'Twas not enough to fortify with poison
Eucerus, and thy tribe of conscious handmaids,
And baffle thus the instruments of torture:
Thou hast exempted them from pangs, 'tis true,
But thou hast taken from thyself the means
Of exculpation . . .
*Oct.* What new lie is this? . . .
*Ti.* Nero now interdicts, that trespasses
Not clearly proved should be alleged against thee.
Another now, another accusation,
Far diff'rent to the former one, awaits thee;
And this delinquent, not constrain'd by torture,
But free, unquestion'd, comes to ask for mercy.
*Oct.* And what delinquent? Tell me.
*Ti.* Anicetus.
*Sen.* The executioner of Agrippina!
*Oct.* What do I hear?
*Ti.* The same who Nero saved
From pressing danger: to his monarch then
Faithful he stood; thou, lady, afterwards
Mad'st him a traitor. He, repentant, now,
Flies on thy track; first he himself accuses;
And all discloses: but not less for this
His punishment awaits him.
*Oct.* What imposture! . . .
*Ti.* P'rhaps, then, he did not promise that the troops,
Of which he is the leader in Misenus,
Should, at thy wish, rebel?—And, on what terms,
Ought I to tell thee?
*Oct.* O, unhappy I!
What do I hear? O execrable race!
O times! . . .
*Ti.* On thee does Nero now impose,
To clear thyself at once of shameful loves,
Of instigating leaders to rebel,
Of disaffected words, of stratagems
So often, yet so fruitlessly, contrived

Against Poppæa; and of rabble tumults;
Or he insists that thou confess thy guilt:
And for this purpose he allows to thee
This coming day.
*Oct.* . . . Too much he gives to me.—
Go thou, return to him: beg him that he
Here with Poppæa come. I would alone
To them disburden my so many crimes:
I ask no more: so much obtain for me;
Go. Let Poppæa come exultingly
In my disgrace to triumph; I expect her.

## Scene IV.

OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Sen.* What wouldst thou do?
*Oct.* Expire; before their eyes.
*Sen.* What dost thou say? . . . Alas! if thou dost wish it,
He will forbid thy death . . .
*Oct.* And would I ask
Such an inestimable gift from Nero?—
From others I demand it; and I hope . . .
*Sen.* Nero was once well known to me; but yet,
I must confess, that now I'm overwhelm'd
With blank astonishment. Each moment he,
Far beyond all conception, shows himself
More terrible.
*Oct.* For a most lofty purpose,
I in my secret thoughts have chosen thee,
O Seneca. Thou mayest prove to me,
If love, esteem, or pity in thy breast
Thou bear'st for me, to-day. To me wert thou
Of incorruptible and spotless virtue
My former master; thou art call'd upon
To be to me this day the minister
Of necessary death.
*Sen.* O Heav'ns! . . . what hear I? . . .
Should death be daughter of a madden'd impulse?
*Oct.* Am I so fallen, then, in thy esteem,
That thou accountest me incapable
Of an immutable decision now?

What, is not death of all the menaced evils,
Perchance the least? What else remains for me?
Speak.—Thou art silent?
*Sen.* O disastrous day!
*Oct.* Speak, speak: what else remains for me to do?
*Sen.* . . . My heart thou rendest . . . But can I e'er be
Cruel to such a pitch? . . .
*Oct.* Shall wisdom now
In thee be so fallacious? Canst thou be
So cruel as to see me dragg'd the victim
Of my ferocious rival, who esteems
My death an insufficient sacrifice,
If free from infamy? Hast thou the heart
To leave me thus exposed defencelessly
To the indecent and extorted charges
Of ev'ry ribald? to the cruel wrath,
The wrath insatiable of wicked Nero?
*Sen.* . . . O hapless day! Why have I lived so long?
*Oct.* But, what now stops thee? . . . And what fearest thou? . . .
P'rhaps thou hast yet a hope?
*Sen.* Who knows? . . .
*Oct.* Thou, less
Than any other, hopest: thou dost know
Nero too well: thou for thyself hast fix'd
(And certainly wouldst not to me deny it)
To 'scape from him by voluntary death:
Thou, firm in this, thou deemest me herein
Inferior to thyself: yet lovest me?
Nero is dreadful to me, while I see
This wretched and tormented frame of mine,
The dwelling of my soul. He may expose it
To all that's exquisite in pain and sorrow.
And should I yield to menaces and torments?
And if from fear there should escape my lips
Of not committed, nor imagined faults,
A forced confession? . . . For full many a year
Accustom'd to see death as near at hand,
Thou art secure: not thus am I; in age
Yet immature, and in my heart unbraced;
Nursed in the lap of delicate indulgence;

Ne'er school'd by nature to a genuine virtue;
And 'gainst a premature, and cruel death,
Arm'd feebly, and imperfectly: by thee,
If so thou wilt, I may escape from life;
But have not constancy to wait for death.
*Sen.* Unhappy I! with my declining years
I hoped to rescue thine. 'Twas my design
That from my lips the people should have heard
The hidden, wicked, horrid arts of Nero; . . .
But I have lived in vain: all Rome is hush'd;
And only listens to its wretched fears.
To me the egress from this fatal palace
Is now forbidden . . . Heav'ns! who can prevail,
Himself not impious, 'gainst an impious master?
*Oct.* Thou weepest? . . . Me from infamy and pangs
Ah! save: from death, thou seeest, 'tis in vain
To hope it. Save me, pity bids thee . . .
*Sen.* Though . . .
I e'en were willing, . . . how, . . . in such short space? . . .
I have no sword with me; and instantly
Comes Nero . . .
*Oct.* Thou hast poison always with thee:
In these opprobrious thresholds, of the just
The sole resource.
*Sen.* I, . . . with me? . . .
*Oct.* Yes; thyself
Toldest me this in former times. Ah, then,
Like a fond father to a daughter, thou
To me revealedst the most secret thoughts
Of thy afflicted soul. Remember, ah!
I also wept with thee at thy recital.—
But, wouldest thou deny it? I already
Have ris'n above myself. Necessity
Makes e'en the weakest valiant. Presently
Comes Nero; at his side he always wears
A dagger: I will tow'rds it spring, and grasp it,
And with it pierce myself . . . My hand perchance
May lack address: yet I will make the trial.
Of having sought to murder him, at once
I shall be charged by Nero: and thou'lt see me
Doom'd to a death unheard of . . .

*Sen.* Ah! what arrows
Of pity dost thou dart against me, lady? . . .
Thou wouldst by me obtain it . . . Thou'rt mistaken;
I have no poison with me . . .
*Oct.* . . . Dost not thou
Wear on thy finger still a faithful ring?
Behold it; I will have it . . .
*Sen.* Ah! desist . . .
*Oct.* In vain . . . I grasp it. And I know its use:
It holds within a swift and painless death . . .
*Sen.* I call the Heav'ns to witness . . . I conjure thee, . . .
Restore it to me . . . If another way . . .
*Oct.* No other way remains. Behold it open'd . . .
I have already with my breath absorb'd
The dust mortiferous . . .
*Sen.* Woe, woe is me! . . .
*Oct.* May Heav'n reward thee for the precious gift,
To me so opportune . . . See . . . Nero comes . . .
Ah, hasten . . . death . . . to set my spirit . . . free.

## SCENE V.

NERO, POPPÆA, TIGELLINUS, OCTAVIA, SENECA.

*Ne.* Thou fatal cause of all that I endure,
Who from my hands can rescue thee at last?
Who now shouts for thee? Where is all the people?—
Thou hast well chosen: 'tis thy last resource
To manifest thyself; and so to publish
To Rome and all the world thy countless crimes;
To clear me to my people, and receive
What thou deservest, death with infamy.
*Sen.* The moment was well chosen; I repent
No more.
*Oct.* Already art thou fully clear'd,
O Nero; triumph. That I e'er was thine,
And that I ever loved thee, I have given
Myself already the due punishment.
*Ne.* The punishment? What hast thou done?
*Oct.* My veins
Already have imbibed a mortal poison . . .
*Ne.* And whence? . . .

*Pop.* O Nero, now thou'rt mine indeed.
*Ne.* The poison, whence? . . . 'Tis false.
*Ti.* Thou oughtest not
To trust her words; a watchful guard . . .
*Sen.* A guard
May be deluded; thus with thine it fared.
The gods refuse not, to the just, deliv'rance.
*Oct.* Poison will soon destroy me; thou wilt see it:
Behold, who in compassion gave it to me;
Rather, to say the truth, I snatch'd it from him.
He will exult in it, if thou for this
Shouldst punish him; thence I conceal it not.
See; my salvation in this jewel lay.
Thou, on the day of our disastrous nuptials,
Shouldest have given me a gem like this . . .
*Ne.* I see it; yes, this is the last, this is
The most atrocious plot, whereby to make me
Detested by all Rome. Ah miscreant, thou
Contrivedst it; but soon . . .
*Pop.* Thou hast escaped,
Octavia, from thy punishment; in vain
Thou hopest to escape from infamy.
*Oct.* Shall I reply to thee?—To my last words
Do thou, O Nero, listen. I now touch,
Believe me, on that awful crisis touch,
When mortal fears and hopes alike subside,
When simulation can no more avail,
E'en had I ever practised it . . . I die:
And Seneca destroys me not: . . . thou only,
Thou slayest me, O Nero: though not given
By thee, the poison whence I die, is thine.—
I charge thee not with this as with a crime.
Sooner thou shouldst have done this; from the moment,
In which I first became displeasing to thee;
'Twere far less cruel then in thee to slay me,
Than to bestow thyself upon a woman,
Who, willing it, could ne'er know how to love thee.
But all I pardon thee; and pardon thou
(My only crime) if I from thee have wrested,
By hast'ning thus my death a few brief hours,
The pleasure of unlimited revenge.

All, Nero, all I willingly had given,
Except my honor; and for thee had suffer'd
All mortal pangs, save that of infamy . . .,
I hope no evil will result to thee, . . .
From . . . my . . . decease. The throne is thine: enjoy it:
May peace be thine . . . Round thy ensanguined bed . . .
I swear to thee . . . to never . . . never . . . come . . .
A mournful spectre . . . to disturb . . . thy . . . dreams . . .
Her thou meanwhile one day wilt know.—
*Ne.* The more
I know her, more I love her; and I swear
Always to love her more.
*Sen.* These words inflict
The last shock on her heart: she dies . . .
*Pop.* O come;
Let us now quit these horrible apartments.
*Ne.* Yes, let us go: and let the camp and Rome
Know that I slew her not: and also know
The crime and punishment of Seneca.

## Scene VI.

SENECA.

*Sen.* I will forestall thee.—Future times shall know,
Exempt from fear and flattery, the truth.

IX.

# TIMOLEON.

## THE ARGUMENT.

TIMOLEON (born B.C. 410) and his elder brother Timophanes were the sons of Timodemus of Corinth, and his wife Demariste. The character of Timoleon, as set forth by Plutarch, is one of the finest in Greek history, and his leading passion was that which was esteemed above all others by the Greeks,—hatred of tyranny. At the time of the opening of the play Timophanes (who had married the sister of Æschylus) was the chief man in Corinth, and was allowed a guard of 400 men in time of peace. In war, he was commander of the army, and of a daring character, and had had his life saved by his brother in a battle with the Argives.

The first scene shows Æschylus reproaching Timophanes for misusing his power, and hints his suspicions that he has designs against the public liberty. Demariste joins them, and speaks in the same sense and implores him to take Timoleon into his entire confidence. Timophanes defends himself, and alleges that Timoleon has associated himself with his greatest enemies. He expresses his willingness however to have an interview with Timoleon, who, though with reluctance, comes to him when he is alone. Timoleon points out to him the danger he is incurring by his arbitrary proceedings, assures him that those he calls his enemies are the few remaining lovers of their country with whom all his own sympathies are enlisted, and that the time has come when Timophanes must choose between being a tyrant or a citizen. He adopts similar

language when Demariste again appears, and even adds that his brother will have to encounter his own fury unless he changes his course. Timophanes pretends that he is doing no more than the law allows, uses dissimulating language, and leaves his mother and brother together. Timoleon beseeches her to use all her influence with Timophanes to retrace his steps in time, and assures her of the calamities impending over them.

Æschylus next tells Demariste that Timophanes has caused the murder of Archidas, the bosom friend of Timoleon, and the leader of the small band of patriots. Timophanes enters and excuses his conduct on the ground that Archidas had alienated his brother's affections from him, and that he was the only obstacle to the unity of Corinth. He avows his intention of associating Timoleon with himself in the government of the republic. Æschylus boldly denounces him, and tells him that Timoleon and himself still remain to avenge their country. Timoleon also comes and tells him that he shall only mount the throne over his dead body. Timophanes says that it is too late for him to retreat, and offers to let Timoleon share the throne with him, or even take his place when the freedom of Corinth has been extinguished. Timoleon disdainfully rejects the offer, and points out the horrors of a tyrant's life. Finally Timophanes refuses to change his policy, and confesses that the ambition of his life is to reign. Timoleon and Æschylus both vow that as long as they remain alive, he shall not do so.

Timoleon next sees Demariste and desires her to make one final attempt to alter the purpose of Timophanes, and adds that one further day's life will be given him to that end. Her efforts with Timophanes are useless, and he hints that a general fresh massacre is impending, to escape which he desires her to induce Timoleon to take refuge in his (Timophanes') house. Æschylus appears, to tell Timophanes that he on his part is in imminent peril. The latter disdainfully answers him, and Demariste implores Æschylus to hasten to warn Timoleon of the plot referred to by Timophanes.

In the last act, Æschylus tells Timoleon that their plans are discovered, and that he had sent to warn their

colleagues. Demariste enters, rejoicing at once at Timoleon's safety and the success of Timophanes. The latter next appears, congratulates Timoleon and Æschylus on having escaped the massacre which he had just effected of their colleagues, who had not received the warning sent to them. To the reproaches of his brother and brother-in-law, his only reply is that their sole punishment shall be to see him on the throne. In pursuance of a preconcerted arrangement, Timoleon hides his face in his mantle, and Æschylus stabs Timophanes, who, before he dies, forgives his brother. The latter is overwhelmed with despair as the curtain falls.

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In this, perhaps the simplest of Alfieri's plays, the story of Timoleon, as told by Plutarch, has been closely followed by the poet. According to Diodorus, however, Timoleon slew his brother with his own hand, and openly in the forum. According to Cornelius Nepos, he was not present on the occasion, although Timophanes was killed at his desire. He banished himself voluntarily from Corinth, and many years afterwards delivered Syracuse from the tyrant Dionysius and became the liberator of Sicily. He was "the finished model of a true republican." Laharpe and Chénier both wrote tragedies entitled *Timoleon*, based on the same story.

Cesarotti calls attention to the extreme simplicity of Alfieri's plot, amounting almost to poverty of action. He calls it a tragedy of original merit, where the author has succeeded in depicting "an amiable tyrant and an admirable fratricide, both inflexible in their maxims." He especially admires the 2nd and 3rd Scenes of Act II., the 4th Scene of Act III., and above all the 1st Scene of Act IV. between Timoleon and his mother, which he calls "surprising and divine." Alfieri himself says, in replying to Cesarotti, that this is a tragedy in which scarcely anything is done, the subject not admitting of it; and that he has always objected to introducing incidents which have no business in the plot. He thinks *Timoleon* the best of what he calls his "tragedies of liberty" (the others

being *Virginia* and *The Conspiracy of the Pazzi*), in respect of "its simplicity of action; the purity of its noble passion of liberty, which is its sole motive power; and the very great deal which the author has made out of little." He sums up the characters as follows: "Timoleon is a citizen and brother; Timophanes is a tyrant and brother, whilst both are sons; Demariste is a woman and mother; Æschylus is a citizen and friend."

Sismondi thinks the subject of *Timoleon* is not well adapted for the stage, and that the virtues of Alfieri's characters are exaggerated.

DEDICATION

TO

## THE NOBLE PASCAL DE PAOLI,

THE MAGNANIMOUS DEFENDER OF THE CORSICANS.

PERHAPS it may appear with reason a mere fatuity to him who only sees present things, to write tragedies of liberty in the language of a people not free. But he, peradventure, will not thus judge, who prognosticates the future from the perpetual vicissitudes of the past.

I, on this account, dedicate this my tragedy to you, as to one of those very few, who, having a very correct idea of other times, of other people, and of other modes of thought, would have been hence worthy to have been born, and to have acted, in an age somewhat less effeminate than our own. But as certainly it has not rested with you, that your country was not restored to liberty, not judging myself (as the multitude is accustomed to do) men from their fortune, but exclusively from their actions, I deem you fully worthy to hear the sentiments of Timoleon, as one that can fully feel and understand them.

VITTORIO ALFIERI.

PARIS, *September* 20, 1788.

# TIMOLEON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| TIMOLEON. | ÆSCHYLUS. |
| TIMOPHANES. | *Soldiers of Timophanes.* |
| DEMARISTE. | |

SCENE.—*The Dwelling of Timophanes in Corinth.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

TIMOPHANES, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Tim.* No, Æschylus; if at my side the sword
All stain'd with blood thou seeest, to use force
I am not led by haughtiness of heart:
The good of all impels me thus to act;
The fame of Corinth which in me has placed
Its delegated pow'r.
*Æs.* Heav'n knows I love thee!
Betwixt us even from our earliest years
The strictest ties of amity were form'd,
To which more dear and sacred ties of blood
Were added afterwards. A happier day
I never saw than that on which I gave thee,
As consort, my belovèd only sister.
When, against Argos and Pleones fighting,
I witness'd by thy side unheard-of proofs
Of martial valor, thou o'ercamest me
With wonder that enhanced my former fondness.—

Thou canst not, and thou oughtest not to live
Obscure in privacy: but I behold
The most illustrious blood of Corinth spill'd
By thee; and thou a tyrant's odious name
Dost thence acquire. Such hitherto I deem
Thou art not; but intense disquietude
In hearing this consumes me.

*Tim.* And perchance,
In acting thus, does a less bitter grief
Prey on my heart? Yet what else can I do,
If I am forced, in order to secure
The city's quiet, to adopt such measures?
That full four hundred swords should wait my nod,
Even my fellow-citizens themselves
Have deem'd advisable. I have mown down,
'Tis true, some lives distinguish'd, but obnoxious,
Which were already equitably due
To public vengeance; and there still remain
Ill-disposed persons of that seed corrupt,
Who, having long been used to sell themselves,
Their city, and their suffrages, complain
Of my authority. That pow'r they find
Too great a hindrance to their venal guilt;
Hence all this envy, tumult, and disturbance.

*Æs.* Confusion, discord, and the love of party,
The insolence of nobles, it is true,
Almost have overwhelm'd us. And, perchance,
What form of government would suit us best,
'Twould now perplex me to decide: but all
With me protest, that we will ne'er endure
A form that is not absolutely free.
With more complacency I should behold
Thy methods to secure internal peace,
If they were purchased with less blood.

*Tim.* Sometimes
Blood, for the sake of sparing it, is spill'd.
From the infected frame if I lop not
The injured members, can the rest be cured?
From the most venal magistrates, in part,
The city I've deliver'd: it behoves us
To trace so many evils to their source,

And fortify with renovated laws,
Applied with judgment, the infirm republic.
If he is call'd a tyrant who renews
The laws, I am a tyrant; but to him
Who tramples on them, if this epithet
More properly belong, I am not one.
The wishes of the many are accomplish'd
By ev'ry deed of mine: the few complain;
What matter their complaints?

*Æs.* And if thy brother,
That man of unexampled worth, Timoleon,
Enrol himself among them, canst thou say
That they are few? More than himself he loves thee;
And yet he openly condemns thy conduct.
I fain would think thy objects laudable;
But, too impetuous, e'en in a good cause
'Tis more than possible thou mayst adopt
Measures too violent: for one to grasp,
Whatever be his object, sov'reign power,
Timophanes, believe me, is an act
Of perilous presumption; and to me
The most tremendous seems: the pow'r to injure;
A mighty provocation to do ill.

*Tim.* Thou speakest wisely: but if ardent passions
Push not men on to lofty enterprise,
Calm wisdom never will accomplish it.
See what in Sparta happen'd to Lycurgus,
Who wish'd to make his absolute control
Subservient to the universal good;
Was not e'en he constrain'd to make himself
A tyrant, to demolish tyranny?
Alas, 'tis force alone that can compel
To virtuous actions a degen'rate people.

*Æs.* Thou hast that force. May Heav'n direct thee now
To turn it worthily to worthy ends!

## Scene II.

DEMARISTE, TIMOPHANES, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Dem.* My son, all Corinth with thy name resounds,
But variously. Yet is it to my heart
A flatt'ring consciousness that I'm thy mother.

Thou wert the champion of thy country: thence
I, on the other hand, lament to hear
That thou'rt suspected of equivocal,
And private views: it grieves me, that in Corinth,
One citizen, though wrongfully, should hate thee.
For thee am I too anxious.
*Tim.* O my mother,
Less wouldst thou love me, if thy fears were less.
I hasten to confront a glorious danger:
But such are the discordant obligations
On us imposed: as woman, thou shouldst fear,
'Tis mine to undertake.
*Dem.* It pleases me,
This thy audacious military pride;
I deem myself no private citizen;
But mother of two heroes, one of whom
Were more than requisite to raise me far
Above each Grecian mother. Ev'ry wish
Were now accomplish'd, could Timoleon act
With thee, and blend thy valor with his sense.
*Tim.* P'rhaps in his heart Timoleon hitherto
From me dissents not; but the transient hate,
Which ever misinterprets the designs
Of those who dare to innovate, he shuns;
And meanwhile leaves me in the field of danger
To toil alone.
*Æs.* In this thou art deceived;
Already have I told thee so: thy schemes
He will not praise; far fewer, if he would,
The number of thy foes would be.
*Dem.* 'Tis true;
For this I came. Timoleon is in years
Alone not equal to thyself; canst thou
Disdain to have him, then, in all thy schemes
Thy coadjutor? For his gentleness
Is fitted to control thy eager rashness.
Fatherless children I already see,
Afflicted widows, mothers destitute,
Casting on me their discontented looks;
On me, as on the cause of all their woes.
Many by thee have died: if rightfully,
Why does thy brother blame thee for it? Why,

If wrongfully, dost thou thus act? In Corinth
The greatest virtue, not the greatest power,
Gave us at first ascendency. Ah, yes,
Upon the dreaded footsteps of my sons
Let tears be shed, but be they tears of foes;
And let the citizens exult with joy
On your belovèd steps; let me receive
Their benedictions that I am your mother.
*Tim.* Yes, in the camp, where valor only gains
Ascendency, the first place to ourselves
Ourselves we give: within the idle walls
Of a divided city, envy, arm'd
With calumny and fraud, the chiefest place,
To those who have a claim to it, denies.
'Tis indispensable, alas! too much so,
That we endure, before more lasting joy,
Transient distress, would we exterminate
This deadly serpent; and whoe'er does this,
Must look for glory after long endurance.
That in proportion as I merit glory,
My brother feels for me less love, I grieve.
*Dem.* Vile and invidious thoughts in him? . . .
*Tim.* I think not;
But yet . . .
*Æs.* But yet, no lofty enterprise
Thou e'er canst consummate, if strenuously
With heart and hand he aid thee not.
*Tim.* From this
Who hinders him? I have entreated him
A thousand times: averse he always seem'd.
My coadjutor I disdain him not;
But I endure him not my interrupter.
*Dem.* Can I a peril patiently behold,
To which thou'rt liable, by him unshared;
Or see thee gain a palm, where he is absent?
Go to him, Æschylus; to this abode,
Which for a long time now no more he deems
The dwelling of his brother or his mother,
Bring him to us. Or he shall be convinced
By us, or we by him; so that to-day
One thought alone, one object, and one will
To Demariste and her sons, be law.

## Scene III.

DEMARISTE, TIMOPHANES.

*Tim.* P'rhaps he will come at thy entreaties; long
Has he to my repeated prayers been deaf:
He as a foe avoids me. Thou wilt hear,
How ev'ry scheme of mine malignantly
With dark hues he disfigures.
*Dem.* Evermore
Timoleon is a paragon of virtue.
Thou wilt not deem such praise as thy reproach:
Of one son to another may a mother
Speak it unblamed. No pleasure 'tis to hear
Why he avoids thee. That thou'rt loved by him,
Thou knowest: with his premature discretion
He formerly attemper'd the excesses
Of thy too fervent early years; himself
Caused thee of the Corinthian cavalry
To be elected captain: well mayst thou
That fatal day remember, when thy valor
Had too far onward with thy partisans
Blindly impell'd thee, and entangled thee
Among the Argive spears: who rescued thee
From certain ruin on that fatal day?
Say, did not he at his most serious risk,
And he alone, perchance, to thy adherents
Preserve their honor, to thyself thy life,
And victory to Corinth?
*Tim.* Mother, I
Am not ungrateful; all I recollect.
Ah, yes, my life is his; for him I keep it.
As much as glory I my brother love:
Tremendous dangers I alone confront;
He afterwards the precious fruit of this,
If so he will, may taste with me in peace.
But what do I suggest? He has not been,
For a long time, what he was once to me.
He ranks among his most belovèd friends
My most invet'rate foes. That Archidas,
That overbearing and flagitious judge,
Who at his will now absolutely rules
This residue of magistrates; who dares,

In tones of rage and envy, to proclaim me
Worthy of death; inseparable friend,
Guide, and adviser is he to my brother.—
Why cruelly preserve my life, if he
Afterwards plots to rob me of a treasure
Far, far more precious; fame?
*Dem.* Do not believe
He acts with inadvertency or malice.
Let us first hear him.
*Tim.* Mother, we will hear him.
Ah, be not this the day to manifest
That in a brother's kindness he is wanting,
Or that I am ungrateful! Dost thou know
That he himself would take from me that power
With which he formerly invested me;
And that he says so too?
*Dem.* 'Twere better far
That he shared it with thee: in both of you
Is equal valor; suffer that I say it,
In prudence he surpasses thee: united,
What would ye not perform? What government
Could be so admirably harmonized?
What mother, than myself, more fortunate,
If with one glory and one pow'r resplendent,
I saw you brothers, heroes, leaders, friends?
*Tim.* Mother, I swear that I'll not thwart thy will.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

TIMOPHANES, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Æs.* Timoleon comes this instant: to thy prayers
And mine, reluctantly he lent an ear;
Nothing constrain'd him but his mother's wishes.
*Tim.* Among his many virtues, well I know,
A yielding heart he counts not: but to-day,
If upright meanings, join'd to upright deeds,
Will ever profit me, will be the time,

When his inflexibility will yield
To my persuasions; or that day will now
Arise no more.
*Æs.* Whichever of you two
I hear the last, methinks the truth resides
With him: and yet the truth is one alone.
By friendship and by blood to thee conjoin'd,
By friendship and by reverence to him,
I fain would find an opportunity
To show to both the greatness of my love.
Ah! be united; and to your resolves
Myself, my heart, my mind, my sword, my substance,
Do not disdain to have as ministers.
*Tim.* I know thee well, my Æschylus . . . I see
Timoleon coming: leave us both together;
I would at length converse with him; to me
He may in single conference perchance
More unreservedly disclose his thoughts.

## Scene II.

TIMOLEON, TIMOPHANES.

*Tim.* Once more, my brother, I behold thee here,
Within this home of ours, though now so harshly
By thee deserted, always thine. I grieve
That only the entreaties of our mother,
And not thy own spontaneous will, to-day
Restore thee to my sight.
*Timol.* Timophanes . . .
*Tim.* What do I hear? thou call'st me no more brother?
Perchance thou deem'st it a disgrace?
*Timol.* One blood,
One mother, and one country, gave us birth,
Timophanes: a brother hitherto
I *am* to thee; thou, *callest* me a brother.
*Tim.* Ah! what unmerited and harsh rebuke
To me thou offerest! . . . In which of us
Did anger first arise? What do I say?
Anger 'twixt us? Thou only art with me
Incensed. From me thou fleddest; thou didst first
From our maternal home withdraw thy feet:

Did I not, to retain thee there, employ
Tears and entreaties? But thou gavest ear
More willingly to wicked calumnies,
Than to my cries. To thy rage, I opposed
Not rage, O no; but love, forbearance, reason,
In vain.—Thou seeest now in what esteem
I hold thee: in the arms of prosp'rous fate
Thou didst abandon me; hence I indulged
A hope, nay, certain faith, that I should find thee
In adverse fate a refuge: I meanwhile
Hoped evermore to soften thee, and make thee
Enter as partner in my joyful state . . .

*Timol.* Joyful? O! what say'st thou? How speedily,
Since I have ceased to see thee, hast thou pass'd,
Beyond all bounds, the license of misrule!
To shed blood ev'ry day, a joyful state?

*Tim.* But thou thyself, whose days were evermore
Illumed by justice and controll'd by truth,
Didst thou not give to me the sword of justice?
Didst thou not gain for me the pow'r I hold,
The guerdon of my services, thyself?
What force, then, is it of an adverse fate
Which always causes, if one man shed blood,
The action to be deem'd tyrannical;
While if a number share in shedding it,
'Tis call'd a deed of justice?

*Timol.* Hear me.—We
Brought up together, fully know each other.
Ambitious, thus prevented from obeying;
Impetuous, which made evermore to thee
All moderate command impossible:
Such in thy house, in Corinth, in the camp,
Wert thou.

*Tim.* And dost thou for the gift perchance
Of victory and life upbraid me now,
Which it seem'd good to thy discerning valor
To give me in the camp?

*Timol.* That gift of mine
Arose from duty, not beneficence;
At that conjuncture fortune smiled upon me.
Now, make me not repent it. Than thyself

I never saw a more accomplish'd warrior;
Nor a more valiant leader than thou wert
Did Corinth e'er possess. But afterwards,
When from internal broils it was esteem'd
A cure (and of all ills it was the worst)
To keep a standing army, and elect
Over that army a perpetual head;
If thou wert chosen to the dang'rous honor,
If on thyself the military power,
Join'd to the civil, fell; impute not thou
To me the fault. I seek not to deny it;
I was reluctant to appear myself
More diffident in my own brother's cause,
Than others for a mere compatriot were;
But for thee, from that day, for thee I trembled,
And for my country more: nor in my heart
Did envy enter, no; I wept alone
At thy distinction.

*Tim.* My distinction? How?
Was it not also thine? My counsellor,
My friend, my leader, wert thou not to me,
If so thou wouldest? and had we put forth,
Thy judgment thou, and I my enterprise,
Whom should we then have fear'd?

*Timol.* Whether thou deem
Thyself my brother or my monarch, now
In all respects inaptly thou with me
Adoptest flatteries.—What sayest thou?
Wert thou not deaf to ev'ry word of mine,
From that disastrous day when thou wert raised
Unto a new and unaccustom'd power?—
Then was our former unpretending dwelling
Begirt with guards: thou proudly forth didst issue,
By regal pomp surrounded: on each face
Mingled alarm and indignation sat:
The thresholds of this house, no longer mine,
By impious sycophants besieged: all entrance
Denied to truth: and impious vile detractors,
Thirsting for gold and blood, audaciously
Flocking in crowds; and mercenary spies
And satellites, and tears, and arms, and quarrels,

Silence and terror . . . Saw I not all this? . . .
And do not I (ah too much!) see it *still*?
Could such a fierce and ominous assemblage
Form a fit train for me? Hence I withdrew,
For this was not a citizen's abode;
And in my bosom, far more yet than anger,
I carried with me pity for thyself,
And for thy error and infatuate pride.
I palliated thy repeated faults
For a long time; the people and the nobles
Heard me assev'rate oft that thou wouldst not
E'er make thyself a tyrant. Hapless I!
For thee degraded, for thy sake become
A liar, I was well-nigh, in thy cause,
A traitor to my country; for thy heart
I fully understood. Ungrateful one,
To rescue thee from danger, and avert,
Through thy means, such dishonor from myself,
Thus did I act; and not to clear for thee
A way to guilty pow'r, but leave to thee
One for repentance . . .

*Tim.* And for this intent
Thou hast selected in my stead new brothers
From my most open, bitter enemies . . .

*Timol.* The few remaining lovers of their country
In them I've chosen. I consort with these,
Not from my hate to thee, but love to them;
And haply to suspend (since thou wilt not
Divert it from thee) that just lofty vengeance
Which ev'ry citizen who loves his country
Cannot deny it. I would not at first
Thy arbitrary impulses restrain;
In this I greatly err'd: to shelter thee
From that disgrace thou hadst incurr'd so justly,
I suffer'd thee, without reproof, to spill
Innocent blood; or haply if 'twere guilty,
Blood spill'd by thee beyond all use of law.
Too much I loved thee; too much was thy brother,
Beyond the duty of a citizen.
I welcomed the illusion, that the hate,
The restless terror, and the dark suspicion,

That always emulously agitate
The wav'ring heart of ev'ry man who dares
To make himself a tyrant, tearing thine
Little by little, yet for ever tearing,
Would be too fierce a torment; and at once
A spur to penitence . . . In this I hoped;
I hope it still; yes, brother, and I now
Conjure thee to it; by these tears unfeign'd,
These patriotic and fraternal tears,
That thou see'st coursing down my cheeks (strange sight!);
And by the suppliant accents of a man
Who never trembled for himself, O hearken!
The day at length has come; thou art arrived
At that imperative and fearful point
Between a tyrant and a citizen,
From which thou must precipitately fly,
Or cease to be my brother, and for ever.
*Tim.* Archidas speaks in thee: his sentiments
I recognise too plainly!

## Scene III.

DEMARISTE, TIMOLEON, TIMOPHANES.

*Tim.* Mother, come;
Ah! may thy intercession be availing
To make my brother's heart relent a little . . .
*Timol.* Yes, mother, come; and may thy intercession
Avail to give me back a genuine brother.
*Dem.* Ye love each other: why let jealousies
Disturb your love? . . .
*Tim.* His virtue too austere,
Not suited to the times . . .
*Timol.* His too aspiring
And haughty wishes, worthy of the times;
But not of one who is by birth my brother.
*Dem.* But what? his pow'r, not gain'd by violence,
Can that afflict thee? He who saved his country,
Wouldst thou have him amidst the lowest people,
Obscure, degraded, undistinguish'd, nothing?
*Timol.* What do I hear! O pestilential, fierce,

Insatiable thirst for regal power!
How soon dost thou each person enervate
Unfurnish'd with a shield of lofty thought!
How quickly does the' insidious appetite
For arbitrary sway, in ev'ry heart,
Tempted by fair occasions, root itself!—
Is it excluded from thy heart, O mother?
Thyself a citizen, gav'st us our lives,
Brothers and citizens: nor deemedst thou
The name of citizen disgraceful then:
In a true country born, thou fedd'st us here,
And in her service here thou brought'st us up:
And hear I words from thee within these walls,
Scarcely befitting the distemper'd weakness
Of a despotic oriental queen?

*Tim.* Mother, thou see'st it: he twists all to evil.
Hear how his indiscreet, fallacious zeal
Makes him insensible to nature's cries.

*Dem.* How many times have I not heard thyself
Revile this city? Its corrupted customs,
Its venal magistrates . . .

*Timol.* But tell me, mother:
Didst thou e'er know me, e'en in words, prefer
To those base magistrates of whom thou speakest,
A monarch absolute, and hireling troops?
O mother, for your honor and for mine
I will imagine thee yet innocent;
And thee, my brother, more impetuous still,
Than criminal. To what thy heedless schemes
May lead thee, see'st thou not? I then will be
A light, a revelation to thy darkness.
Thou yet hast time. A noble reparation,
Worthy of a great citizen, remains;
A sacrifice most generous . . .

*Tim.* And 'tis?

*Dem.* A deed magnanimous 'twill surely be,
If in thy gen'rous breast it is conceived.
Reveal it to him.

*Timol.* Thy authority,
Which, by abusing it, thou makest guilty,
Spontaneously renounce it all.

*Tim.* To thee
Will I renounce it, if thou wilt accept it.
*Timol.* From whom didst take it? From thy brother?
Speak;
Or from thy fellow-citizens? Restore
Thy country to its rights; suspect not me
Of perfidy. If any one but thou
Had held this pow'r, he long ago had lost it.
Reflect, that hitherto with thee I've used
The plainest means . . .
*Tim.* Timoleon, I reflect
That an authority the many gave,
The many only can resume. The force
Of law created me; repeal that law,
I yield at once.
*Timol.* And dost thou speak of law,
Where an audacious mercenary band
Confounds the right by might?
*Tim.* Wouldst thou expose me
Defenceless, to the brutal turbulence,
The envy, rage, revenge of Archidas,
And others equally with him malignant,
Whose fears alone restrain them?
*Timol.* Be thou arm'd
By innocence, and not by bullying braggarts;
Nor make a pretext of the fears of others
To hide thine own. If thou not guilty art,
Why fear? If guilty, then not only fear
The rage of Archidas, but that of all;
—And mine.
*Dem.* What do I hear? Alas! I came
To reconcile you, and another source
Of animosity inflames you both
To fiercer rage than ever? Woe is me!
*Tim.* Mother, with thee I leave him. He, inflamed
With too much anger, now could ill with me
Contend. Be our opinions what they may,
Accordant or discordant, no dissent
Can e'er oblit'rate from my constant heart
The recollection that I am thy brother.

## Scene IV.

DEMARISTE, TIMOLEON.

*Timol.* Behold a miracle! He who till now
Was rage itself; who in his fervid breast
Nursed flames more turbulent than those of Ætna;
Already is an adept in the art
Of simulation: and controls his rage
Now that he learns to smother it in blood.
*Dem.* My son, thy mind, too much pre-occupied,
In this, deceives thee.
*Timol.* Ah, no! rather thou
Art too much prejudiced; nor wilt thou see
Objects most manifest and most pernicious.
Mother, from thee afar I live; and 'twere,
To make thy judgment sane, needful to thee
To have me always at thy side. I was
Once dear to thee . . .
*Dem.* And still thou art; believe me . . .
*Timol.* Thou then shouldst love, as much as thou lov'st me,
The one true glory. Emulously we
Should try once more to gain it: from my brother
I would remove an everlasting blot:
I love him, more than self, I swear, I love him;
As much as I love thee. Thou hast much power
To work upon his passions; and shouldst try
In a resolve to strengthen him, at once
Magnanimous and indispensable . . .
*Dem.* To become private?
*Timol.* To become a man
And citizen; to disenthrall himself
From universal hatred; to retrace
The old forsaken path of real virtue;
To be once more my brother: for as such
Already, I no more acknowledge him.
Mother, in vain thou flatterest thyself:
Here truth, except I bring it, enters not.
Ye live among intimidated slaves:
And, though embosom'd in the heart of Corinth,

Breathe other air: here emulously all
Applaud your cruel hardihood: ye hear
Torments call'd justice; frantic outrages,
Suitable punishments; audacious deeds,
Preventive measures. Leave your guilty dwelling;
And ye shall hear an universal murmur,
Cries, imprecations, menaces, and insults:
Investigate the secret heart of each;
And in the hidden chambers of each breast
Ye shall find hatred, schemes of ruin; all
Have sworn your infamy and massacre;
And in proportion as the gen'ral fear
Delays the punishment, so much more cruel,
Atrocious, merited, and violent,
Will it be pour'd on your devoted heads . . .

*Dem.* Ah son! . . . Thou mak'st me tremble . . .

*Timol.* For yourselves
I always tremble. Do thou, then, I pray thee,
Take pity on thyself, on him, on me.
I am so circumstanced, that ev'ry ill
That falls on you with added weight is mine:
But, at the same time, ev'ry injury
My country bears from you is also mine.
My heart is torn by two discordant feelings;
I am a son, a citizen, and brother:
Beloved names! no one knows how to prize them
More than myself, no one more ardently
Seeks to perform the duties they involve:
Ah! put not to the test which tie o'er me
Is most prevailing. I am born a Grecian;
And thou, a Grecian, understandest me.—
Thou seeest me approaching the sad point
Of being your avow'd, fierce, mortal foe;
Then yield belief to my remonstrances,
While as a brother, and a son, I speak.

*Dem.* O! what god speaks in thee? . . . I will endeavor
To make thy brother hear me . . .

*Timol.* Ah! depart
Without delay; exert o'er him thy influence.
If he no more unsheathe his bloody sword,
'Twill be, I hope, in time: to-day thou canst,

Yes, thou alone canst reconcile thy sons;
Live with them joyfully beneath the shelter
Of popular applause;—or disunite,
And bring them to destruction, yes, for ever.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

DEMARISTE, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Æs.* O mother of Timophanes, 'tis time
That thou shouldst feel regret for such a son:
At last he has assumed without disguise
The character of tyrant.
*Dem.* What has happen'd?
Where is he? Can I not trace out his steps?
*Æs.* What? Know'st thou not? . . .
*Dem.* I know not; speak.
*Æs.* Alas!
By means of his corrupted satellites,
He takes the life . . .
*Dem.* Of whom?
*Æs.* In his own blood
Welt'ring lies Archidas; the violence
Is most notorious; in the public street
Wounded he dies: nor from the mangled corpse
The impious murderers fly; ferociously
The gasping, half-dead body they surround,
And intercept all aid. Each passer-by
Affrighted flies, and scarcely dares to weep
Inaudibly. He dies, that noble, just,
Humane, and only citizen, who brought,
To the degraded magistracy, fame.
Timoleon sees himself in him bereft
Of the unenvying rival of his virtue,
His bosom friend, the only...
*Dem.* Ah! what tidings
Dost thou relate? O Heav'ns! now more than ever,

Will peace betwixt my sons be interrupted;
P'rhaps 'tis for ever broken. Hapless I! . . .
What shall I do?...
*Æs.* Go where thou hast a right,
And of a mother's pow'r avail thyself.
What reparation for a crime so great
There now remains for him, I scarce can tell,
That may suffice at once to mitigate
The anger of his brother, and of Corinth:
If he will make concessions, and renounce
His guilty pow'r, there may be hope e'en yet.
Timoleon is his brother; I, by blood,
And friendship, am too much united to him:
We thence shall have unmerited aspersions;
Yet p'rhaps still save him...but, if he have now
Entirely harden'd his perverted heart
By his new arbitrary sway of blood,
Tremble for him thyself.
*Dem.* What do I hear?
*Æs.* I, erewhile blinded to his dawning vices,
Have been the dupe of his atrocious arts.
Though late, I see that now the hour is come,
When with him, my affection, conduct, language,
All, all must change.
*Dem.* Ah! hear him first, I pray thee...
Who knows? perchance...I cannot blame thy anger;...
Nor dare I to defend a deed so guilty;
Yet some pretence, at least, of reason, must,
To this, have urged him. Hitherto his sword
Fell only on the guiltiest citizens:
Tremendous, it is true; but to those only
Tremendous, who, though impious, and condemn'd,
Unpunish'd stood, refractory to law,
Above all law, which, in their sight, was mute:
Such hitherto was he...
*Æs.* If thou dost hear him,
I fear that he will give thee arguments
More guilty than his deeds themselves.
*Dem.* Behold him.

## Scene II.

TIMOPHANES, DEMARISTE, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Dem.* O son;... alas!... what hast thou done, O son?
A deed, more fitted to confirm the blot
Of tyranny, with which thou art aspersed,
Couldst thou have done than this? All shudder at it;
And, by it, thou hast forfeited for ever
Thy brother's love. Alas! who now can tell
What the result will be?... Thy bosom friend,
Thy Æschylus, e'en he is murmuring:
Thou mak'st thy mother also weep. Alas!
Too true, too true it is, thou broodest over
Both illegitimate and dang'rous schemes,
Confronting dangers imminent and ghastly;
The bandage, which did blind me in thy favor,
Thou from my eyes at length thyself removest.

*Tim.* Whence this extravagant and frantic grief?
Wherefore? What evil can result to thee?
Was Archidas by amity, or blood,
With thee connected? I perceive it clearly,
Thine is a borrow'd grief.

*Dem.* To me what evil?
What evils to thyself may thence...

*Æs.* And ought
Thence to result.

*Dem.* Call'st thou the public hate,
Which I am forced to share with thee, no evil?
To have a mother always trembling for thee?
To gain the hatred of my other son?
To see 'twixt you an everlasting discord?...

*Tim.* And must I hear you then, yourselves not vulgar,
Judge with the vulgar? Do thou with thy words,
I, by my actions, try to change my brother.
Archidas had, so long as he had breathed
The breath of life, in him, against myself,
Hatred, and anger, evermore transfused:
Yes, of my brother's fondness he usurp'd
The better part from me. This finally,
Among his many other crimes, appear'd,
To me, the capital delinquency.

*Æs.* He was too patriotic, too upright;
This was his crime.—But hast thou recollected,
That to our country, which not yet is dead,
Timoleon yet remains? And Æschylus?...
Thou foolish one!... Ah! whither dost thou rush?
I loved thee hitherto; how much, thou knowest:
I'm a true man; and such I deem'd thee too:
And so thou wert with me at first; a friend
Thou hadst in me, a friend I had in thee...
By blood alone we are united now;
Ah spare, ah spare, this last remaining tie!
Behold me, I am one who loftily
And loudly doth profess and swear to be
The bitter foe of simulated virtue.
*Tim.* Less fickle than yourselves, I do not change
So suddenly as you my love to hate.
Dear above ev'ry thing I held you once,
And still I hold you: to regain my friend,
And brother, ev'ry means will I adopt.
Thy frank remonstrances offend me not:
But yet I hope, now that I have removed
The chiefest hindrance, to recover thee.
As to thee, mother, I have long ago
Fully convinced thee, that I would impose
A more efficient government on Corinth.
Let me not have to calm you all at once!...
*Dem.* I am offended for thy brother...
*Æs.* What?
Art thou impassive as respects thy country?
*Dem.* I am a mother...
*Æs.* Of Timophanes.
*Dem.* Of both...
*Æs.* No, of Timoleon thou art not.
*Dem.* Thou hearest him?... Unhappy I!...
*Tim.* Permit,
That I alone confront my brother's rage,
Before thou hear him. It would be to thee,
To listen to his fierce rebukes, too painful.
I promise thee by arguments to make
Converts of these: no evil can result
From thence to them: and, spite of his aversion,

I will, that with myself Timoleon share
That pow'r, which now securely I possess.
From me, do not thou, by thyself dissent:
A blind love of thy country sways thee not:
Thou lov'st thy children, thou. Leave me awhile:
Perchance my brother will come here to me;
I would convince him first: and afterwards
Thou in our mutual joy shalt bear a part.
*Æs.* It is as possible that he should yield,
As that myself should yield to thee . . . But, say:
Art thou resolved, if he should not relent,
To follow thy infatuated schemes?
Think of it; speak . . .
*Dem.* O Æschylus, . . . my heart
Is fill'd with horrible presentiments . . .
Ah! son, I pray thee; do not move at least
A step from hence, of which I know not first.
*Tim.* I promise this to thee: now go in peace:
Nothing henceforward will I undertake
Without thy approbation: live secure;
I swear this unto thee. I feel within me
A certainty that I shall be ere long
To thee the herald of domestic peace,
As well establish'd as our public greatness.

## Scene III.

TIMOPHANES, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Æs.* Timoleon has a heart more masculine:
Thou wilt not conquer him, as thou hast done
Thy mother, by her feminine ambition
Conquer'd already.
*Tim.* All the means, in me,
Of conquering all, are placed: believe my words.
*Æs.* Now thou dost speak at last; this is a language
Precisely corresponding to thy deeds.
At least I hold thee somewhat less degraded,
Now that thou speakest as a tyrant should.
I speak as should a citizen. I came
Expressly to renounce thy amity.
I grieve not that thou hast deluded me:

Had I deluded thee, my cause for grief
Were greater, for a man sincere am I.
*Tim.* I do not thus with levity renounce
The ancient lofty ties of holy friendship.—
Æschylus, hear me.—I would fain convince thee,
In spite of prejudice, that ev'ry virtue
In me is not assumed, that rectitude
May be allied to gratified ambition.
If this my thought, to make myself the first,
I kept from thee, if also I denied it,
If I to thee denied it; wouldst thou thence
Have trusted to my silence, or denial?
Did ever man abandon sov'reign power?
P'rhaps thou didst err in making me thy friend,
While thus I rose to greatness step by step:
But, thou wouldst err no less, if thou shouldst cease
To be so, when my pow'r is now so great.
*Æs.* Then was the blood of Archidas decreed
To manifest to me thy turpitude,
Which hitherto I knew not? Can it be,
That thou art thus in bondage to thy crimes? . . .
But, if, O Heav'ns! I cease to be thy friend,
I yet remain allied to thee . . . Ah, yes!
By my belovèd sister, in thine eyes
Still precious; by those dear and tender babes,
Of which she made thee father; I beseech thee,
On her, on them take pity, since for us,
And for thyself thou feel'st it not. Not yet
Is Corinth, as thou thinkest, quite struck dumb:
A joy, too transient only, for thyself
Dost thou prepare; for us, a lasting grief.
Ah! hear me . . . See, I weep; for thee I weep.—
Thou art not yet so far advanced in guilt,
That ev'ry obstacle thou hast surmounted;
Nor art thou innocent enough to fear none.
Many more lives must yet be sacrificed,
Ere thou canst fix the basis of thy throne;
And p'rhaps thou hast not yet the harden'd guilt
Required for such a process . . . Thou beholdest
How I address thee as a man; methinks,
That in thy bosom thou retainest still

Some sparks of human feeling. Many steps
There are, from loving as I once loved thee,
To hating thee: . . . and it will cost me much
To make the change . . . Ah! force me not to this.
*Tim.* Thou art the best of men; ah, wert thou not
The most deceived! But yet for this, O no!
I love thee not the less.—But I behold
Timoleon coming . . .

## SCENE IV.

TIMOLEON, ÆSCHYLUS, TIMOPHANES.

*Tim.* Ah! grant thou to me,
That first I speak to thee, one word alone:
Thou shalt speak afterwards . . .
*Timol.* I deem'd thou wert
A tyrant, but at least a lofty one;
But thou'rt as base as any other tyrant.
Fool that I was! Is there in all the world
A tyrant of an uncorrupted heart?—
I myself bring, to the sublime assassin
Of each good citizen, one of the best
That still remains: in me lives Archidas:
Thou hast committed unavailing crimes;
Collected Corinth breathes in me; in this
My energetic, brave, and most free soul.
Me, me, then slay; and be thou silent: now
Nothing remains for thee to say to me;
It only now remains for thee to kill me.
*Tim.* Now, hear the new professions of a tyrant.—
This my life is thy gift; thou, brother, thou
Preservedst it for me; resume thy gift:
I am not hedged around by armèd guards:
Here is my dagger: plunge it in my breast.
Behold, I keep my bosom yet defenceless;
No timid mail is there; I firmly stand,
Firmly as thou.—Why dost thou now delay?
Quickly strike thou. The hate that in thy breast
Thou cherishest 'gainst tyrants, in my blood
Now vent it all: if thy just hate I merit,
I am no more thy brother.—This my power

No man in all the world can now take from me:
Thou, thou alone, and with impunity,
Canst take my life.
*Timol.* No, if thou slay'st me not,
Thou ne'er shalt keep that execrable power.
Already art thou wading deep in blood;
Wilt thou now halt midway? Proceed, proceed:
Only through this my breast to Corinth's throne
Canst thou ascend: there is no other way.
*Tim.* I sit on it already, and thou art
Unhurt. My city, and my force, I know:
And I already have advanced too far,
Now to recede. There are none equal here
To me, except thyself. 'Twould be in me
Consummate infamy to make myself
Again inferior to my own inferiors;
Thine, I may be; and if thou wilt, I will.
Trust me that here the hydra-headed monster,
Popular freedom, ne'er shall rise again.
To thee the government of one seems guilty;
But, if exemplarily just, that one
By practice might refute thy theories.
That one, be thou; and profit by my sins;
Thus Corinth, more than I have taken from her,
In thee will reacquire; and I shall feel
A pride in being second to thyself.
*Timol.* Thy wicked words more keenly wound my heart,
Than could that dagger, with whose reeking point
Thou hast restored my Archidas to freedom.
Yet slay; slay on; but do not thou presume
To teach the arts of arbitrary sway,
Or servitude, to one by birth a Grecian.
Successive tyrannies alternately
Have, it is true, disfigured ev'ry state
Of this clime sacred to the cause of freedom:
But here has blood been always cleansed by blood;
Nor has the sword of vengeance ever slumber'd.
*Tim.* And let the trait'rous sword come when it may;
And fall upon my breast: but, while I breathe,
Corinth and Greece shall see, that evermore

The sway of one is not corrupt: shall see,
That a prince raised by bloodshed to the throne,
Can make his people happy with wise laws;
Each man secure; internal peace enjoy'd;
His subjects' fear enhancing their obedience;
Strong in himself, the envy of his neighbours . . .

*Timol.* What wouldst thou teach us? are not kingly crimes
To all men known? Does not degraded Asia
Exhibit ev'ry day their dire effects?
'Tis of that soil a plant: there, takes it root;
There, less than men it makes men; banish'd hence,
It makes the Grecians like the gods themselves.
We are the loftiest people of the earth.—
What dost thou covet for thyself? To be
A king exempted from the lot of kings?—
Of ev'ry good man thou art now the foe,
And wilt be more and more so; ev'ry virtue
Invidiously despising; flatter'd, fear'd,
Abhorr'd; to others an exceeding burden,
A torment to thyself; unworthy praise
Evermore craving, in thyself convinced
That thou deservest only execration.
Fears in thy heart, and terror in thine eye;
Of apprehension, and suspicious thoughts
Eternal prey; an everlasting thirst
For blood and gold, and never satisfied;
Deprived thyself, of what thou tak'st from others,
Sweet peace of mind; to no one in the world
By blood or friendship join'd; of fetter'd slaves
The still more fetter'd lord; the first in rank,
The least in heart of all . . . Ah! tremble; tremble:
Such wilt thou be: if such thou'rt not already.

*Æs.* Ah! no; the pure divinity of freedom
Never yet breathed into a mortal heart
Words more divine, more warm, more true, more strong.
Already by the fury that transports him
Is my full bosom seized. Canst thou resist,
Infatuated man, a portraiture,
At once so accurate, and horrible,
Of the vile life, in which thou'rt plunging?

*Tim.* Maybe
Ye speak the truth.—But now there are no words,
Strong howsoe'er they be, that can avail
To turn me from my purpose. It is past,
For ever past, the time for me to be
A faithful citizen. My master passion,
My sole, immutable, and lofty wish
To reign, has now become my whole of life . . .
Brother, I have already told thee so:
Thou canst alone correct me by the sword:
All other means are vain . . .
*Timol.* And I to thee
Repeat it: thou shalt never have the sceptre,
Except thou kill me first.
*Æs.* And, with him, me.
To that fond friendship which I had for thee,
I feel already in myself succeed
An ardent, strong, atrocious enmity.
Yes, thou shalt find in me an enemy
No less embitter'd, fierce, implacable,
Than I was once a friend both fond and hearty.
And recollect, that I am not, like him,
To thee a brother.—In the tyrant's presence
I here meanwhile to thee, Timoleon, swear
Eternal fealty of blood. I swear
By thy side, for my country, to confront
The worst extremities: and if at last
Our labors should be vain, I further swear
That I will not survive her one brief moment.
*Timol.* O thou insane one, for an instant think
If so much be resolved by one who is
Thy bosom friend, and also bound to thee
By ties of blood, what will so many others,
Incensed by thee, perform?
*Tim.* Enough, enough.—
I fain would have you friends; but fear you not
As my opponents. Now exert yourselves
For her, ye gen'rous champions of your country.

## Scene V.

TIMOLEON, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Timol.* Ah, ill-advised, infatuated brother!
Could I save thee, as I feel confident
To save my country!
*Æs.* In his mercenaries
Doth he confide; he knows that other troops
Corinth now has not to oppose to his.
*Timol.* With this last massacre he has contrived
To terrify the people; but their hate
A thousand times he has augmented by it;
And he has not in ev'ry heart extinguish'd
Courage, and resolutions of revenge.
Already by a secret embassy
Sent to Mycene, have the people sought
Immediate aid; his very satellites
In part are disaffected. Wretched man!
In his own snares he will be surely caught! . . .
Ah! were there yet a remedy! . . . But he
Has robb'd me of my friend, and, dearer far,
My liberty . . . But yet . . . he is my brother;
Still do I pity him . . . Could any one
Somewhat persuade him . . .
*Æs.* This his mother might,
Were not her heart corrupted: but too much . . .
*Timol.* She also for the last time now shall hear me.
Ere I do this, I fly to supplicate
My friends, that they alone would grant to him
What of this day remains, for penitence;
Forthwith will I return; and ev'ry plan,
To make him change, will I in turn adopt:
Entreaties, tears, fear, menaces, and mother.—
Ah, come thou also; let us means contrive
By which the' uplifted sword may be awhile
Suspended o'er his head, and yet no loss
His country thence sustain. Let us to-day
Render to him the latest offices
Of friends and relatives: but citizens,
If this avail not, are we;—and shall be
Constrain'd, though weeping, such to prove ourselves.

## ACT IV.

### SCENE I.

DEMARISTE, TIMOLEON.

*Timol.* I come to reap the harvest of thy judgment.
Since last I saw thee, Archidas alone
Hath fall'n assassinated: thy discourse
Hath hitherto much check'd thy haughty son:
Now, certainly, thou hast entirely changed
And mollified his heart: that which in vain
My ineffectual and fraternal words,
The universal cries, the gen'ral tears,
Friendly reprovings, and the bitter pangs
Of a remorseful conscience, sought to do,
Has been effected by the absolute,
And virtuous intercessions of a mother.
*Dem.* . . . Heav'n knows, my son, with how much eagerness
I set to work to execute the task;
But is there any rock that is as hard
As is the bosom of Timophanes?
He hath imbibed the poisonous draught of power;
Nor are there prayers, or tears, or arguments,
Or force, that now can change him. I with thee
Was here conversing, scarcely had he left us,
When he inflicted a most cruel death
On Archidas. After such deeds as these,
What use are words? I spoke in vain; still more
Timophanes persists . . . Ah thou, who art
Humane and wise, do thou awhile then yield
To irresistible impetuous power:
P'rhaps afterwards . . .
*Timol.* Speak'st thou to me, O woman?
*Dem.* Alas! . . . If thou yield not, what will befall us? . . .
Ah! hear me. Wouldst thou see him massacred?
Or wouldst thou, that by force a turbulent,
Insane ambition now should drag him on
To crimes more heinous still? His state from thine
Is too dissimilar: of too much blood
He is already guilty, that he now

Could live securely, were he to disarm:
Now is it indispensable that he
Supply with pow'r the forfeiture of fame:
But thee, who'rt arm'd in innocence complete,
Calm reason may convince; and I may find
Thee a more facile listener. His power,
His honor, p'rhaps e'en life itself, all, all,
If he should yield himself to us, he loses:
Thou, if to me thou yieldest, losest nothing . . .

*Timol.* What infamous conclusions! Callest thou
Thy country nothing? nothing my renown?—
Art thou my mother, thou?—If he should cease
To be a tyrant, for his life thou fearest?—
But tell me: thinkest thou that he can live,
Provided he persist to be a tyrant?

*Dem.* O Heav'ns! . . . Each word of thine breathes nought but vengeance.
Fierce to thy brother art thou, while for thee
He is all love: while he would have in thee,
In thy intelligence and lofty heart,
His country live; and that magnificence
Which he in time of war bestow'd upon her,
He wills, that now she should receive from thee,
In time of peace, still greater than before.
And this he swore to me . . .

*Timol.* And dost thou yield
Belief to words (or be they true, or false)
Yet always guilty? Thou shouldst know, methinks,
That I'm a citizen, and not the city.
The living country is in sacred laws;
In upright magistrates, its ministers,
And not its masters; in the multitude;
And in the great; in uncorrupted votes,
And in the union of these suffrages;
In the incessant and pervading freedom,
That makes all equal who are so in goodness:
And, more than all, the country's life consists
In the fix'd hate of individual rule.
This know'st not thou?—It was the highest insult
That could be shown me by yourselves; to dare,
Or feign to deem me the confederate

Of tyranny in you.—And, lady, thou
Art equally convicted with thy son,
By signs conclusive. It is clear to me,
That less it pleases thee to be the mother
Of me, a citizen, than him, a tyrant.

*Dem.* 'Tis clear to all, that, as thou canst, I cannot
Divest myself of love for my own blood;
That I am evermore a mother . . . Thus
Wert thou a brother!

*Timol.* O, what mother art thou?
The Spartan women, that which mothers should be,
They teach thee in their austere commonwealth.
The' effeminate fondness of a partial woman
Is thine, miscall'd by thee maternal love,
Making thee yield thy son's intrinsic honor
To his unprincipled and headstrong pride.
Behold the Spartan mothers, in their sons
Rejoicing, for their country sacrificed;
Counting their wounds; and washing, kissing them,
With patriotic, not lamenting tears;
And she who is of most sons destitute,
By stately grief ennobled, moves along
Most dignified in aspect: these are women,
Women, and citizens, and mothers, these.
Thou, to thy son's inflexible intent,
Although thou know'st it criminal, dost yield;
And dar'st thou say to me, and dar'st thou hope,
That I should also yield to it? Ah, why
To my still more inflexible intent,
Which thou dost know to be the child of virtue,
Dost thou not rather yield? For him alone
Dost thou ejaculate a mother's name;
For me, dost thou suppress it?

*Dem.* Calm thyself:
Hear me, Timoleon . . . What have I not done?
And what have I not said? . . . I am aware
That on thy side is reason; but thou knowest
That force, which listens to no arguments,
Combats for him . . .

*Timol.* No, mother, no; by words
Thou hast done little, and by deeds still less,

Nay, nothing. No impassion'd sentiments
Inflame thy heart; no patriotic fire,
That gives new courage to the weakest breast,
And had inspired thee with an eloquence
Imperative, and masculine, and stern.
In thy antipathies and sympathies,
Timophanes, believe me, craftily
His hopes hath founded: he discovers clearly
How much the fascination of a throne
Flatters thy woman's bosom. Mother, say,
Has he e'er heard thee thunder forth in tones
Of lofty menace? Has he ever heard thee? . . .
*Dem.* As far as might a feeble mother venture,
I have presumed; but . . .
*Timol.* Was a Grecian mother
Ever incapable, or ever feeble?
Thou hast, more than thou meritest to have,
Effective arms; if thou neglectest them,
Thine is the fault. If he to prayers, and tears,
And arguments resisted; thou thyself
Shouldest have banish'd hence (for this abode
Is thine) the scandalous, accursèd train
Of tyranny; have taken from thy son
All methods of corruption; taken from him,
Ere aught thou tookest, weapons worse than swords,
The master key of all base passions, gold.
Did not thy consort's last and sacred will,
Do not the laws of Corinth, render thee
The absolute disposer of our substance?
*Dem.* 'Tis true, I might have spoken; . . . but, if he . . .
*Timol.* Thou shouldst have acted, not have spoken, mother:
And if his guilt arose to such a pitch
As to contend with thee; why didst not thou,
With hair dishevell'd, weeping, and in weeds
Of widowhood, with face and bosom torn,
Depart from this contaminated roof?
And if thy hand, at thy departure hence,
The children of thy son thou shouldst have led,
Themselves not guilty for their guilty sire;
And with them shouldst have dragg'd their weeping mother;

A grateful spectacle of ancient virtue
To all good citizens: thyself have shelter'd,
And them, with me, thy true, thy only son;
And to himself the tyrant have abandon'd,
Amid his bullies and his parasites:
Not an accomplice of his power usurp'd
Have loftily proclaim'd thyself; and thus
Have from thyself removed the dreadful blot
Of taking part in it.—Hast thou done this?
Such an exposure could he have resisted? . . .
Surely he scorn'd, that which he well might scorn,
Imbecile tears and female lamentations.

*Dem.* My son, . . . I fear'd . . . Ah! hear me . . .

*Timol.* He should hear thee . . .

*Dem.* I dreaded to increase his cruelty,
By thus defying him: I turn'd to thee,
And still I turn to thee, to whom an evil,
Still greater than to him, may now ensue;
To thee . . .

*Timol.* Thou fearest? If fear be thy guide,
If fear in thee must now usurp the place
Of patriotic love; know thou that ruin,
Irreparable ruin, over him,
Not over me, impends; and that this day,
This day alone, if thou wouldst have him saved,
Remains to thee.

*Dem.* What do I hear? . . . Alas! . . .

*Timol.* Yes; this one day, now verging on tow'rds night . . .
I love my brother; but I love him, mother,
With a far diff'rent love to thine: in heart
I weep for him, although with thee I weep not.
I speak to thee with this ferocity,
Because I love you both . . . For Corinth now
No more I fear; . . . I fear alone for you.
Timophanes unwarily confides
In his bribed mercenaries . . . Ah, my mother,
My last petitions now I raise to thee.
I supplicate thee for my brother's life,
If thou dost hold it dear. I now alone
Over his head myself suspended hold
The citizens' retributory sword:

I add, I only, to the tyrant's days
A single day: I, who first ought to wreak
My vengeance in the life-blood of the tyrant,
I, ah disgraceful weakness! I preserve it.
Take warning from my words; and be persuaded
That Corinth has not yet so much incensed
Her guardian deities, that one man's presence
Suffices to annihilate her now.—
Behold the tyrant. I no more accost him;
I have said all to him that I can say.—
If ill result, blame thou thyself alone.

## SCENE II.

DEMARISTE, TIMOPHANES.

*Tim.* Timoleon then avoids me?
*Dem.* Ah, my son! . . .
*Tim.* Has he so much disturb'd thee? Hast thou not
Yet alter'd him?
*Dem.* O Heav'ns! his words were death
To my sad heart. O tremble; one day only,
This day alone, remains to thee . . .
*Tim.* I tremble?
'Tis now too late; now that my enterprise
I have accomplish'd.
*Dem.* How art thou mistaken! . . .
Perchance, without thy brother, thou hadst not
Been living yet . . .
*Tim.* Dost thou so much despise me,
That thou expectest to obtain by terror
That which to prayers I will not yield? I speak
More openly than he does; no light proof
Be it to thee of this, that nought I fear.—
All their contrivances I know; I know
That, coward foes, they now betake themselves
To arts in vain. They also have their traitors:
Assistance from Mycene they expect
In vain; in vain have they corrupted some
Of my attendants: all is known to me:
Their steps, their thoughts, their plans, I know all fully.
I do not think that I shall yield to them;
But, should that happen, I will ne'er recede;

No, never. Had they openly opposed me,
I should have blamed them less; but they have had
Recourse to fraud. That fraud shall be their ruin.
*Dem.* Alas! . . . art thou, then, so unnatural,
That e'en thy brother? . . .
*Tim.* He asperses me
With tyranny; but yet, much more than he,
Am I a son and brother. I would give
My life, at any time, to rescue his:
If I distinguish him from other foes,
Thou thence mayst judge. Himself and Æschylus,
From the approaching universal slaughter,
Alone shall be exempt . . .
*Dem.* Dost thou yet speak,
O Heav'ns! of further slaughter? What's thy purpose?
Pause; I command thee. To thy detriment
Too long have I been silent! My connivance,
My silent condescension makes me guilty;
Timoleon's indignation tow'rds his mother,
Alas! it is too just . . .
*Tim.* My destiny
Is irreversibly decreed: the throne
Or death.—In vain thou art incensed; in vain
Thou supplicatest, weepest, menacest.
I have already issued the command
Of death; and for my brother stand in fear;
For military rage is ill controll'd.
Be it thy task, thou mother of us both,
To make him fly from all assemblies: ah!
Do thou exert thy utmost to persuade him
Beneath our roof to shelter. From his mouth
I never learn'd his stratagems: to him
Tell mine, as far as may be requisite
For his protection. I am apprehensive
Lest he should still persist to seek the place
Agreed upon with Æschylus: here only
He will be fully safe . . .
*Dem.* And should I yet
Avail to draw him hither, hapless I!
When of the slaughter he shall hear, . . . perchance, . . .
O dreadful day! . . . he then will breathe revenge . . .
*Tim.* When he shall see that I would spare his life,

P'rhaps he may change: but also he may slay me:
And let him do it; he alone may do it:
This life he may resume, since once he saved it:—
But to retake from me this throne, which I
Gain'd for myself? not Heav'n itself could do it,
Except it first reduce my frame to ashes.

## Scene III.

ÆSCHYLUS, DEMARISTE, TIMOPHANES.

*Æs.* Be not amazed if thou yet seeest me:
Behold the count'nance of a gen'rous foe:
And the first dart, that I direct against thee,
Is the unforced confession, that e'en now
A mortal blow is falling on thy breast.
*Dem.* Ah son, I cannot leave thee! . . . At thy side
I must remain . . . Thou yieldest? . . . Be convinced
By this brave man . . . O Heav'ns! . . . what art thou doing? . . .
*Tim.* Against each dart my breast is mail'd in steel.
I fearlessly await you.
*Æs.* —Hear me: never
Was I more frank with thee than I am now:
My heart addresses thee; nor is that heart,
Because I am thy adversary, changed,
Save for the better: hearken.—Though thou'rt brave,
Thou art but one; unwary is thy trust,
If placed on others: thou'rt beset by death
In thousand shapes: many as are the swords
That thou see'st round thee drawn in thy defence,
There is not one of them which suddenly
May not be turn'd against thy breast. Ah! trust
To me alone. Be changed, or slay, or tremble.
*Tim.* Leave me to face my destiny. This day,
Which ye announce to me as so tremendous,
Will not be spent ere ye will be convinced
Of your mistake: nor will it then to you
Be unacceptable, to find that pity,
Of which to me ye now are so profuse,
More efficacious as another's boon.

### Scene IV.

ÆSCHYLUS, DEMARISTE.

*Æs.* Thou wilt, then, have it so? I have discharged,
Beyond thy merits, what I owed to thee.—
*Dem.* Ah run! Bring here Timoleon: I would fain
Impart to him great tidings. Each assembly
Persuade him to avoid: he is in danger . . .
Watch over him . . . I tremble . . . Bring him here,
At all events, before the night descends;
He will not be secure elsewhere. Ah, go;
Have pity on a mother; save one son;
I fly to make the other more relenting.

### Scene V.

ÆSCHYLUS.

*Æs.* What perturbation! O! what horrid secret
Beneath her accents lurks? . . . O Heav'ns! . . . And whence
In the fierce tyrant so much confidence?
Perchance he knows our schemes? Perchance ourselves
Are by his very traitors now betray'd?—
All his flagitious plots his mother knows;
And more she trembles for her other son?
Then has the impious tyrant in his heart
Determined now to make a final slaughter? . . .
Ah! if it should be so! . . . Let me fly hence;
That I may see the great Timoleon safe,
Whose safety is the country's: otherwise
Let us all perish with him for her sake.

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## ACT V.

### Scene I.

TIMOLEON, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Timol.* Now that 'tis night, why drag me here?
*Æs.* Ah! come:
Thy mother thou shalt hear . . .

*Timol.* What shall I hear,
That I already know not?
*Æs.* She would see thee;
To thee great tidings . . .
*Timol.* And perchance thou darest
With her unite now to deceive me?
*Æs.* I?—
What I projected, thou this instant heardest.
But to save thee! And that is now accomplish'd.
*Timol.* What say'st thou? Saved from what? Explain thyself.
*Æs.* Pardon, if one thing I conceal'd from thee . . .
*Timol.* Ah! p'rhaps thou hast presumed? . . .
*Æs.* Be not offended.
Words so ambiguous from thy mother's lips
I lately heard; such genuine apprehension
For thee I witness'd in her trembling heart;
Her importunities were so excessive
That I should bring thee here, that, at all risks,
I was resolved to do it. On our colleagues
I fear'd some lofty danger was impending;
This I conceal'd from thee; I was too sure,
That if I told thee this, on no conditions
Could I detach thee from them.
*Timol.* O, what hear I?
Dar'st thou to make this execrable dwelling
My shelter in an universal danger?
Ah! thou beginnest ill.
*Æs.* I will atone
By a more worthy end, I swear to thee,
For such beginning: but, I wish'd thee safe.
*Timol.* Now, what then knowest thou? . . . What is the danger? . . .
*Æs.* Little with certainty I know; but all
I fear: and the audacious countenance
Of the secure Timophanes to this
Compell'd me; and the strange evasive aspect
Of the irresolute and trembling mother.
Those satellites of his, bribed by our gold,
Who undertook to watch his stratagems,
And give us warning of them, are, at once,

Detected, and destroy'd. None now remain
In whom we may confide. The place appointed
For our assembling likewise is discover'd.
*Timol.* —O fatal hour! . . . O apprehended day!
At last art thou arrived?—We are betray'd,
Assuredly betray'd . . . To-day our courage,
Our patriotic love, must be redoubled.
We never were constrain'd, as we are now,
To prove the mettle of our ardent spirits;
And, what is worse, we never were constrain'd,
As we are now, to practise artifice.
*Æs.* I hastily dispatch'd to all our colleagues
The tidings, that, except with risk of life,
To-day, we could not meet. I think with pain
That, to a messenger p'rhaps insecure,
I gave the charge: but brevity of time,
And earnestness to rescue thee the first,
Made me incautious.
*Timol.* Ev'ry man ere me
Thou shouldst have rescued. And what better fate
Could crown my wishes? With my falling country,
I should have fallen: what wish I, but death?—
Why save me? . . . To what dire vicissitudes
Do I remain?
*Æs.* Thou now art placed in safety:
And we should save our country. Let us now
Hear Demariste.
*Timol.* —An accomplish'd tyrant
Already is Timophanes: to thwart
All schemes; to tyrannize o'er ev'ry soul;
As he is terrified, to terrify;
All, all, he knows.
*Æs.* But yet he knows not how
To foresee all.
*Timol.* Unhappy one! . . .
*Æs.* He wills it;
Himself would have it so: of all my pity
He has divested me. O Heav'ns! Who knows? . . .
P'rhaps now our faithful colleagues . . .
*Timol.* Two of them,
Two of the most courageous, at a distance,

Timæus and Orthagoras, I saw
Coming towards us: but I made to them
A signal to retreat.
*Æs.* Thou erredst. Would
That I had seen them also!
*Timol.* We suffice,
If we come here to death.
*Æs.* We are too many,
If we are forced to an unwilling vengeance;
But, by their means, we might perchance have warn'd
Our other colleagues.
*Timol.* Why hide aught from me?
'Twere best now to depart . . .
*Æs.* Some one approaches,
Or so it seems to me: hear'st thou?
*Timol.* I hear it;
It is a woman's step: perchance my mother.
*Æs.* 'Tis she.

## Scene II.

DEMARISTE, TIMOLEON, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Dem.* Ah son! . . . O joy! . . . Once more I see thee.
What a compassionate, distinguish'd kindness,
Thou, Æschylus, hast render'd me! I see
My son once more . . . and 'tis to thee I owe it.
*Timol.* Whence such excessive joy? Hast thou avail'd
To make the tyrant's stubborn heart relent?
Say, with the noble universal joy
Of ancient freedom dost thou welcome me?—
Ah no! for yet I see upon thy face,
Deep sculptured, all the marks of regal pride.
In what exultest thou? Ah, thoughtless woman! . . .
*Dem.* That I behold thee, and once more embrace thee.
I fear'd that thou wouldst never more direct
Thy feet to my abode . . .
*Timol.* It is not thine,
But the abode of sorrow, of imposture;
Or 'tis not hers at least who's now my mother.
Perchance thou now hast summon'd me to thee
That I may lead thee hence? O come; to me

'Twill be a triumph to regain my mother;
'Twill be to me an animating omen
That I shall afterwards regain my country.
*Dem.* . . . And dost thou still so cruelly persist,
O son? . . .
*Timol.* O mother, dost thou still persist
Thus to contract thy heart? Hast thou aught else
To say to me?
*Dem.* I fain would tell thee; but . . .
*Timol.* Thou darest not; I see it. But already
Thou, by thy silence, hast express'd far more
Than I would hear. And what is this? Thou tremblest? . . .
I understand: thou art a queen: thou art
The mother of a tyrant. Nothing now
Remains for me except to answer thee.
Thou'rt worthy here to dwell, and here to die.
There was no need to summon me for this:
Thou knowest that I am no more thy son.—
Come, Æschylus; from this infected roof
Let us depart.
*Dem.* Ah no! . . . Pause yet a little . . .
Thou must not quit us.
*Timol.* Leave me: I will go,
Nor evermore return to you. Disgrace,
Exile, death, torments, I would rather bear
Than ever see the servitude of Corinth . . .
Æschylus, let us go . . .
*Æs.* 'Tis Corinth's will
That we should now be here; thou oughtest not
To stir from hence . . .
*Dem.* Thou canst not do it now.
*Timol.* Who hinders me from doing this?

## Scene III.

TIMOPHANES, DEMARISTE, TIMOLEON, ÆSCHYLUS.

*Tim.* P'rhaps I.—
That force, which brother may with brother use,
I now exert tow'rds thee. Let me embrace thee;
And let me render thanks for thy deliv'rance
To Æschylus, my mother, fate, the gods.

*Timol.* Thou of fresh massacres hast then been guilty?...
Ah, yes! I see in thy unquiet looks
Recent destruction. Cruel that thou art!...
—Ill hast thou done to save me.
*Tim.* We are all
Now in a place of safety; where no person
Can injure you, nor ye can injure me.
*Timol.* —Reflect, reflect, cannot we yet to thee
Be ministers of good?
*Tim.* Yes; by a quick,
And unreserved submission to my power:
Yes; by your being now the first to give
Others the' example of obeying me.
*Æs.* Obeying thee?
*Timol.* We first?
*Tim.* Yes: since thou art
Unwilling to divide with me my throne.
Perchance if ye had been avow'd opponents,
To you I might have yielded. Openly
I dealt with you; this my sincerity
Should have made you sincere...
*Timol.* Thou didst at first
Usurp authority by fraud: this done,
'Twas easy afterwards for thee to be
Audacious in thy insults. Force with thee
I should at first have used, and never art,
To reconvert thee to a citizen.
*Æs.* And did not I with a loud voice just now
Proclaim myself to thee an enemy?
And say that, though not girt by satellites,
Although alone, and destitute of power,
We should be fatal to thy usurpation?
And that thou oughtest evermore to guard
Against ourselves?—Were we, or are we now,
Less generous than thou?
*Tim.* Thou didst say this;
And now an ample recompense to you
From hence results. From this last massacre
I would exempt you only, and ye are so.
Thus your ingratitude more signally
It pleased me to confound; and not disturb

The joy of my new government.—Feed not
Your flatter'd spirits with fallacious hopes.
The gloomy shades of night, which hitherto
Were wont to veil your criminal assemblies,
Yes, of those shades, these now have been the last
To your insidious friends. In vain to them
Your warning was dispatch'd; it never reach'd them:
That very place to trait'rous deeds devoted,
Where they clandestinely assembled, has,
To all of them at once, become a tomb.
*Timol.* What do I hear?
*Æs.* O Heav'ns! . . .
*Tim.* And here ye see
Your trait'rous letters to Mycene sent;
Behold; already they return: and he,
To whom they were address'd, is also slain.
Wouldst thou have more? those two conspirators
Who, clad in arms, around my threshold wander'd,
Timæus and Orthagoras, have found,
Also, a death deserved.—Wouldst thou have more,
Around thee look, and thou wilt there behold
Obedience, blood, and terror; nought besides.
Why dost thou longer now delay to yield
Thyself to me? What canst thou do to me,
If yield thou wilt not? I have well convinced you,
That ye are now my sole remaining foes;
That I have render'd you to ev'ry one,
Not less than to myself, contemptible.
*Timol.* Thou never shouldst have spared our lives alone.
This I again would in thy ears repeat:
Thou hast done nothing, if thou slay'st not us.
*Æs.* Hope never to recover us as friends.
Nor flattery, nor time, nor force can do it . . .
*Timol.* Nor can my mother, as I see her now
Stand silently, and full of pride and shame.
*Æs.* Hold us not in contempt. Against me first
The executioner should turn thine axe.
Thou hast not tasted yet of kindred blood:
Taste it; the trial will be grateful to thee:—
Nor any other blood remains, for thee
More indispensable to spill, than mine.

*Timol.* Slay me the first of all. In sparing me,
Thou dost but offer me an added insult.
Thou hast snatch'd from me each most sacred thing:
I am, with everlasting infamy,
By thy means laden: why delay? destroy me.
*Tim.* No, on your stubborn hearts will I inflict
Severer punishment: upon the throne
Beholding me; and then obeying me.
*Timol.* —Hast thou resolved, then, not to take our lives?
*Tim.* I have resolved to hold you in contempt.
*Timol.* Art thou resolved to reign?
*Tim.* I reign already.
*Timol.* Unhappy I! . . . Such is thy will . . . At least
Let me not see it.[1]
*Æs.* Die then, tyrant, die.
*Dem.* O Heav'ns! ah, son! . . .
*Tim.* Ah, traitor! . . . I . . . expire . . .
*Timol.* Give me that sword: my country now is safe.
*Æs.* Ah! for thy country live.
*Dem.* Secure him, guards . . .
[2] Run . . . seize the traitor . . .
*Tim.* . . . No, my mother . . .
*Timol.* Give me
That sword; in me . . .
*Æs.* No, never . . .
*Tim.* Guards, retire;
'Tis my command; . . . Let no more blood be shed.
*Dem.* Æschylus dies . . .
*Tim.* Let no one be the victim; . . .
Expressly I forbid it . . . Hence: I will it.[3]
*Dem.* And thou, O cruel, and accursèd brother . . .
But thou, O Heav'ns! thou weepest? . . .
*Tim.* I would have
The throne or death: but yet, at the same time,
I wish'd to save thee, brother . . . By thy hand,
Which rescued once my life, I should have died:
Death so inflicted would have been to me
Less painful . . .

[1] He covers his face with his mantle.
[2] The soldiers hasten up. [3] The soldiers retire.

*Æs.* He, not I, was born thy brother:
To him the signal rightfully belong'd;
To me belong'd the blow.
*Dem.* O ye barbarians! . . .
Ye; whom he would not slay . . .
*Tim.* Do not, O mother,
Longer upbraid him thus. In him already
Affliction is excessive; from his eyes
The tears, in torrents, gush.—I pardon thee,
O brother; do thou pardon me . . . I die,
Admirer of thy excellence . . . If I
Had not attempted . . . to enslave . . . my country, . . .
I had attempted to deliver her: . . .
'Tis the most glorious . . . of all glorious deeds . . .
Yet I see clearly that a frantic love
Of glory did not prompt thee to this act;
The purest feelings of a citizen
Impell'd thee thus to sacrifice thy brother . . .
To thy protection I commit my mother . . .
And do thou, mother, see in him again
A real son, . . . a being . . . more than mortal.—
*Timol.* He dies! Alas! . . . Thou, mother, didst by force
Constrain me to come hither . . . O my brother,
Soon will I follow thee.
*Æs.* Ah! . . .
*Dem.* Son! . . .
*Timol.* For what
Do I now live? For weeping, . . . for remorse . . .
The' avenging furies in my burning breast
I feel already . . . I shall never more
Enjoy a peaceful thought . . .
*Æs.* To me attend:
Thou shouldst not now refuse the first assistance
To thy sick country . . .
*Timol.* I would hide myself
From ev'ry human eye; and shun for ever
The' insufferable light of day . . . I ought
To die of sorrow, if not by the sword.
*Dem.* Unhappy I! . . . O Heav'ns! . . . What can I do?

One son is lost for ever . . . and the other
Doth not remain to me . . .
*Timol.* O mother ! . . .
*Æs.* Come,
Let us withdraw from this heart-rending sight.—
Timoleon, thou shouldst now convince the world,
That thou didst slay the tyrant, not thy brother.

X.

# MEROPE.

## THE ARGUMENT.

POLYPHONTES, the tyrant of Messene, has reached the throne by putting to death Cresphontes, the rightful occupant, and two of his sons. The third, also named Cresphontes, is saved by a faithful attendant, Polydore, and brought up at Elis, under the name of Ægisthus, till he becomes a young man. His mother, Merope, is kept by Polyphontes in honorable captivity in the palace at Messene. These four constitute the characters of the play, a year before the commencement of which Ægisthus had disappeared from Elis and could not be found.

The opening scene shows Merope lamenting her sad fate. She has only remained alive for the sake of her son, and grieves at the absence of all tidings of him. Polyphontes, who has been assured by her that Ægisthus is not alive (a fact which he doubts), enters and affirms to her that, although he aspired to the throne, her husband and children were slain by his soldiers contrary to his wishes. After pointing out that he had since done all he could for her, he endeavors to persuade her to forget her sorrow and share with him his throne. She indignantly rejects his proposals, and her behaviour confirms him in his suspicions that Ægisthus is alive.

Presently the guards bring before him a youth accused of murder. The youth (who proves to be no other than Ægisthus himself) ingenuously tells the whole story, and shows that he killed his antagonist in self-defence, as he was approaching Messene as a traveller on foot, during his

travels through Greece. Polyphontes postpones deciding the case till he hears more about the youth's history, and has learnt the name of the man who was slain. Merope comes in and feels an involuntary interest in the stranger, not knowing him to be her son. In reply to her questions, the latter tells her that he thinks the victim in the fray came from Elis, and she suspects that the dead man was her child. Polyphontes leaves her alone with Ægisthus, and says that she herself shall decide his fate. He then gives her an account of his past life, and much of it makes her think that he may be her son. On the other hand, she thinks still more strongly that he is her son's murderer, and is distracted between her contending emotions.

Polydore appears in the third Act, in his search for the young Ægisthus, and brings with him the girdle which the latter used to wear and which he had picked up near the city. Merope enters and recognizes him, and asks eagerly after her missing son. All he can do is to produce the girdle. She now feels certain that it is indeed Ægisthus who has been killed, and bitterly bewails his death. Polyphontes comes in, attracted by her lamentations. She acknowledges that her son had been alive till now, and Polydore tells the story of his having saved his life at the time of the massacre of his father and brethren; but they both show the girdle to Polyphontes as a sign of his being now dead, and Merope vows vengeance on his supposed murderer, whom she rejoices to have in her power.

In the next Act, Polydore joins Ægisthus, tells him of the danger he is in, and informs him that he is the son of Merope and not his own child, as he has hitherto supposed. Polyphontes and Merope enter. He tells her that she may now slay her son's murderer with her own hand. She bitterly reproaches Ægisthus for the supposed deed, yet all the while feels strong yearnings towards him. Presently Ægisthus announces that the girdle is his own, and has been accidentally lost by him. Merope does not believe him, and in a blind fury prepares to slay him. Polydore interferes and acquaints her that he is indeed her son. Ægisthus tells the assembled people that he is the real Cresphontes and their rightful monarch, but they do not

move in his behalf. Polyphontes asserts that he is an impostor, and finally informs Merope that, unless she will marry him the same day, he will himself kill Ægisthus. Polydore, when the tyrant has left, advises Merope to pretend to admit his suit, cautions Ægisthus to be careful not to irritate Polyphontes, and undertakes to rescue them both.

Polyphontes, when the fifth Act begins, is uneasy at the rising murmurs of the Messenians; and although he does not love Merope and only wishes to marry her to serve his own state purposes, he anticipates being able easily to destroy her afterwards. The priests then appear, with the victim, to consummate the nuptial rites, and all the characters meet together on the stage. Polyphontes makes an address to the assembled crowd, vaunts his own generosity, and says that, if Merope will wed him, he will even make Ægisthus his heir. She hesitates and resists him. He grasps her hand as the signal for the completion of the rites, when Ægisthus (who, as a prisoner, had no arms) seizes the sacrificial axe from the hand of the priest, and slays Polyphontes with repeated blows. The people overcome the tyrant's guards, and, after appeals to them from Merope, Polydore, and Ægisthus, acknowledge the latter as their rightful king.

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The story on which this tragedy is based may be found in Apollodorus, who, however, says that Merope's son (whom he calls Æpytus) was brought up by his own grandfather Cypselus, the king of Arcadia, and further that Polyphontes made Merope marry him after her husband's massacre. Both Voltaire and Maffei wrote tragedies under the same name of *Merope*. Alfieri, in his Life, mentions that he wrote his play in February 1782, after reading Maffei's work, which "excited him to a perfect pitch of indignation and anger at seeing Italy in such a state of theatrical misery and blindness as to make it supposed that this was the best and only tragedy not merely hitherto written (which was true enough), but that could possibly be produced in Italy." Sismondi thinks *Merope*

one of the best of Alfieri's plays, and says that "it is at once interesting and correct in feeling," besides being a completely new conception, notwithstanding the previous works of Maffei and Voltaire. It will be seen that it is dedicated to his (Alfieri's) own mother.

Cesarotti praises highly many portions of this play, but thinks that the interest falls off after the third scene of Act IV., when Polydore discovers Ægisthus to his mother. He prefers the conclusion of the tragedy as given by Maffei as more natural. According to the latter, Polyphontes felt perfectly secure, believing Cresphontes to be dead and Ægisthus to have slain him. Ægisthus is free and unknown to all except his mother. Merope yields to fate, and gives her hand to the tyrant. Ægisthus enters unobserved, as if attracted by curiosity; stands behind Polyphontes; takes up the axe, which is lying amongst the priests' paraphernalia; and strikes the fatal blow. Alfieri in his reply to these criticisms stoutly defends his own version. In the *Parere dell' Autore* he defines the characters thus: "Merope is a mother from the first to the last line, and nothing but a mother; but a queen-mother of tragedy, and not a babyish mamma. Polyphontes is a sagacious, dexterous, and prudent, but not a vile tyrant. Ægisthus is a well-born youth, and so educated as to be able to assume the part of a descendant of Alcides when he learns who he really is. Polydore is a proper person to have entrusted to him by a queen her only remaining son and the sole rightful heir to the throne."

## DEDICATION

TO THE

## COUNTESS MONICA TOURNON ALFIERI.

A TRAGEDY of mine, which has for its basis maternal love, belongs to you, my most beloved mother.

You can judge with accuracy whether I have known how to paint that sublime and pathetic affection which you have so often felt; and principally on that fatal day in which you were by death robbed of another son, my elder brother.

I have yet before my eyes the expression of your genuine and profound grief, which in every gesture of yours transpired with so much intensity: and though I was then in my most tender age, I have still in my heart those words of yours, which were few and simple, but true and terrible: "Who has taken my son from me? Ah! I loved him too much: Shall I never see him again?" and others of the same sort, with which, as much as I could, I have enriched my *Merope*. Fortunate am I, if I have in part expressed that which you so warmly felt, and which I, grieved with your grief, have so vividly retained in my mind!

Although, from my fatal circumstances, I have passed the greater part of my days at a distance from you, I still always preserve for my most beloved mother a lively esteem, respect, and infinite love; of which I give you a most slight proof in dedicating to you this tragedy of mine: but great will be my recompense in exchange, if you give me an assurance of having derived pleasure from it.

VITTORIO ALFIERI.

SIENNA, *August* 27, 1783.

# MEROPE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| POLYPHONTES. | POLYDORE. |
| MEROPE. | *Soldiers.* |
| ÆGISTHUS. | *People.* |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Messene.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

MEROPE.

*Me.* O Merope, for what dost thou still live?
P'rhaps thou'rt no more a mother.—To what purpose
Have I for lustres three within these walls
Dragg'd on a life of sorrow? To what purpose
Been, where I formerly reign'd over him,
The subject of an impious Polyphontes?
A monster who destroy'd, before my eyes,
My consort, and two sons (O sight of woe!) . . .
One still remains to me, the latest pledge
Of inauspicious nuptials; for the throne,
And for just vengeance, by my care preserved;
My only hope; the sole remaining object
For which I wish to live . . . O son, alas!
What now avails it that I saved thee once
With difficulty from the cruel slaughter? . . .
Incautious youth! . . . 'Tis now almost a year,
Since thou abandonedst the sure asylum,

In which with faithful Polydore thou livedst . . .
That sad old man, who ever is to him
Almost a father, six revolving moons
Has quitted Elis, and in search of him
Strays through all Greece: and I no longer hear
Tidings of him, nor of my son: O state
Of horrible suspense! . . . And I am forced,
To swell its agony, within my heart
To smother my insufferable woe . . .
Nor, throughout all Messene, have I one
Who in my grief can share: yet evermore
To my Cresphontes' tomb I have to stray,
Would I indulge my tears . . . O pardon me,
That I have not, ere now, belovèd consort,
Join'd thee in death; our mutual son alone
Keeps me alive; ah, should he be no more . . .
But, some one comes . . . Who? . . . Polyphontes! . . . Ah!
Let me avoid him.

## SCENE II.

POLYPHONTES, MEROPE.

*Polyp.* Merope, return.
Why thus avoid me? I would fain impart
Tidings of weighty import . . .
*Me.* I would fain
Hear nothing from thy lips . . .
*Polyp.* O cruel woman,
Will neither time then, reason, courteous manners,
Nor prayers, avail at all to mitigate
Thy fierce resentment? Thy extravagant
And bitter grief, which seem'd almost exhausted,
Why for a twelvemonth has that grief resumed
All its intensity; and to thyself
Render'd thee such a cruel enemy?
Thou hatest me; and hate so disproportion'd,
My destiny, more than my fault, produces.—
I from thy consort wish'd to take his throne,
But not his life, I swear to thee: but how
Restrain the turbulence of conquering soldiers?
My warriors, all with blood intoxicated,

Pursued him e'en within these palace walls;
Nor from their hands could I deliver him.
I was his enemy, but rightfully.
I, truly, from the noble blood descended
Of the' Heraclidæ, could not well surrender
To him my throne, merely because the urn
Bestow'd it on him.—But the natural grief
Of consort, and of mother, listens not
To reason, or to claims however just.—
I only wish to know, from whence thy anger,
Which hath so long existed, hath derived
New aliment. Do I not try all means
Of softening the hardships of thy fate?
Ah, say what reparation could be made
For a mischance in war, that ev'ry day
I do not make to thee?

*Me.* Now, wouldest thou
That I should render to thee thanks express,
Because by thee I only am bereft
Of consort, throne, and sons? . . .

*Polyp.* Of sons? In life
One of them still remains to thee . . .

*Me.* 'Tis false.
Ah! were it only true! . . . I have lost all:
I even saw that innocent transfix'd . . .
Ah cruel! Thou perchance exultest, thus
To hear the dreadful scene by me recall'd?
On that dire night, in which thy satellites
Ransack'd this palace, where confusion reign'd,
And blood, and cries, and flames, and menaces;
Ah! were not all my children, with their father,
And our most loyal friends, at once destroy'd?
Barbarian! thou, alone to scoff at me,
Assertest, that my little helpless babe,
Which with so many others was first slain,
And then deliver'd to the hungry flames,
By me was rescued? O ferocious heart!
Dost thou regret that thy inhuman sight
On the sad spectacle ne'er fed itself
Of his poor mangled form? Thou didst behold,
And with thy execrable hand didst touch,

The others with a savage greediness . . .
Ah miscreant! . . .
*Polyp.* Lady, if I deem him living,
It is because I wish him so. As yet
The first intoxication scarce was past
Which victory brings with it, ere my heart
Was much disquieted for those slain children;
Who would not only have obtain'd from me,
Destitute both of consort and of offspring,
In time, the sure protection of a king,
And all a father's fondness. Thou thyself
Mayst clearly see it; what support have I
To solace the infirmities of age?
What profit is there in a throne to him
Who has no heir? . . . Since thou assertest, lady,
The death of all thy sons, and I believe it; . . .
At least I may to thee, if not thy sons,
Consort, and throne restore . . .
*Me.* What do I hear!
Of whom thus speakest?
*Polyp.* Of myself I speak.
*Me.* O unexpected, new, and horrid insult!
Dar'st thou to offer to a childless mother,
That bloody right hand which hath made her childless?
Dar'st thou thy thoughts raise to thy monarch's bed,
Who wert his murd'rer? To my widow'd breast
Rather present that very sword that slew him;
I fear it not, produce it . . . But, thou deemest,
Ferocious man, thy aggravating presence,
To me, a punishment more exquisite:
Hence, at all hours before mine eyes I see thee;
Hence, to augment my grief, thou woundest me
With such atrocious words.
*Polyp.* They are most just,
These bitter transports of a sorrowing mother.
Pour out the bursting torrent of thy grief.—
But, why shouldst thou endeavor to persuade me
That its intensity will ne'er abate?
Dost thou to ev'ry reasonable thought
Refuse admission?—Dost thou not live on?
Already thou three lustres now hast spent

In weeping, and uncomforted distress;—
Yet thou supportest it. Each much-loved object,
Thou say'st, is taken from thee; in the world
There's nothing that thou fearest, lovest, hopest:—
And thou remainest living? Then, to give
Some respite to thy sighs, thou feelest yet
That new delights may one day rise for thee:
Then thou hast not yet banish'd ev'ry hope.
*Me.* I? . . . Nothing . . .
*Polyp.* Yes, thou, lady: well reflect
Within thyself; . . . thou wilt discover then,
That the recov'ry, . . of the . . . throne, perchance
Might make thy life less mournful . . .
*Me.* I see clearly;
Thou never wert a father: wholly thou
A tyrant art; the throne, and that alone,
Engrosses all thy thoughts. My babes, my consort,
Far, far beyond all thrones to me were dear; . . .
And I abhor thee far . . .
*Polyp.* Ah, Merope,
Listen to me.—I ought now to select
A fit companion for my destiny.
All is now quiet, all Messenia now
Implicitly submits to my control:
Yet does the recollection of Cresphontes
Live in the heart of many: evermore
The multitude capriciously regrets
The monarch whom they have not. And perchance,
In his short reign he seem'd just, mild, humane . . .
*Me.* He was so: not, like others, a pretender.
*Polyp.* And would I stoop to practise art with thee?
And make parade of that, which, if I said it,
Thou never wouldst believe, that I'm consumed
By love for thee?—Now list to me. I hope
Now to be heard by thee acceptably,
As far as one who has already cost thee
So much distress, may such a hope indulge.—
Danger has ceased; and disaffected thoughts
With it have also ceased: behold my state.
Thine is a dreary life, unpitied tears,

A languishing in pale obscurity:
Thy friends, if thou hast still such, stand aloof,
Or else are kept in silence by their terror.
All here for thee is force; to this, hast thou
Constrain'd me more than others: but at once
All from a single word of thine may wear
A diff'rent aspect. It would seem to me
A useless, cruel, and, if thou wilt yet
Have it, an outrage fatal to myself,
Should I to any other woman offer
The sceptre of Messene, once thine own.
For my delinquency this now remains
The only not inadequate atonement.
A skilful leader in perpetual wars
The camp has seen me hitherto; through me
Messenia's name alone suffices now
To terrify her foes: 'twould soothe my heart
Now to the citizens to prove myself
An exemplary king. Do thou then deign
To fit thyself to present times: thou mayst
Conquer'd do this, if I disdain it not
A conqueror. A life of wretchedness
Thou in Messene draggest; fall'n so low,
Thou canst not lower fall: for thee can I
Do all things: thou, in recompense for this,
If thou'rt disposed to pardon me the past,
Mayst, I confess to thee, now make my yoke
More welcome to Messene.

*Me.* To the good
Thee welcome? Who could ever make thee so?
Welcome to others, thou, who to thyself
Art an abhorrence? Thou dost know too well
How much thy yoke by all men is detested:
Nor other joy than this now mitigates
My pangs.—Provided I would make myself
For ever infamous, and scorn'd, and vile,
Not only to Messene, but the world,
And to myself, which is far worse; to thee
Would I resign my hand. If thou infer,
From my protracted life, an argument

That my affliction is supportable;
I quickly hope that error to confute,
For but a span of life for me remains.

## Scene III.

POLYPHONTES.

*Polyp.* —Cautious in vain; thou art a mother, yes:
A day will come in which thou wilt thyself
Betray the pent-up secret of thy heart.—
O yes! that son of hers yet breathes. What else
In life supports her? Yet it serves my purpose,
To feign, with her, that I believe him dead.
Perchance I may to perfect confidence
The mother lull, while I observe strict watch . . .
But what hath watching hitherto avail'd me?
It never hath befallen me as yet
To intercept a single message; never
Yet to discover where is his asylum;
If it be near, or distant: thus bewilder'd
I know not how to act . . . For many years
Merope seem'd to me, if not content,
Wrapt in a slumber of subsided grief,
As one who o'er a secret scheme of vengeance,
That ev'ry day becomes more ripe for action,
Broods silently. But for a year or more
Her sorrow has resumed its violence,
And her demeanor has been quite transform'd;
The tears, which had been forced back on her heart,
In spite of all her efforts, from her eyes
In torrents gush . . . Perchance her son is dead? . . .
Yet the Messenians in their hearts retain
A faithful recollection of the father:
Nor can I otherwise divest them of it,
Except I place her, with me, on the throne.—
O throne, how great the task of holding thee!

## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

POLYPHONTES, SOLDIERS.

*Polyp.* Guards, let the criminal advance alone.

### SCENE II.

POLYPHONTES, ÆGISTHUS.

*Polyp.* Come thou; approach . . . Methinks thy mien is youthful,
For one so resolute in deeds of blood.
*Ægis.* 'Tis but too true, before thee I appear
Defiled with blood, perchance with guiltless blood:
Strange destiny! and I am also guiltless.
*Polyp.* From whence art thou?
*Ægis.* From Elis.
*Polyp.* And thy name?
*Ægis.* Ægisthus.
*Polyp.* Thy descent?
*Ægis.* Obscure, not servile.
*Polyp.* What purpose brought thee here?
*Ægis.* A youthful fancy,
A love of novelty impell'd me to it.
*Polyp.* Tell me explicitly, and tell the truth,
How thou to such atrocity wert driven.
Though thou hast forfeited all right to hope,
Still I permit thee to indulge it now,
If thou'rt ingenuous.
*Ægis.* To be otherwise
Would be a violation of my nature:
My free condition is unused to fraud.—
By stealth, and unadvisedly, I left
The peaceful dwelling of my aged father;
For many months already had I wander'd
Through various cities, when, at last, to-day
I journey'd tow'rds Messene. I pursued
A narrow and a solitary path,
Destined for humble travellers on foot,

Which winds along Pamisus' shelving banks;
Swiftly I trod this path, urged by desire
To gain the city, which, from distance seen,
Gave, by its pompous tow'rs and glitt'ring fanes,
Abundant promise of magnificence;
When lo! I saw a man advance to meet me,
With eager gait, still swifter than my own:
Onward he came like one that fear'd pursuit;
His mien was youthful; his demeanor bold,
Imperative, and arrogant: from far
He waved his hand, that I should quit the path.
Most narrow was the place, and scarce allow'd
Passage for one; while the precarious track,
By a precipitous declivity,
Descends on one side to the river's brink;
The other side, by thorny bushes choked,
In that direction made the man unwilling
To turn aside for me. I was incensed
At his deportment, free myself by birth,
Accustom'd to obey the laws alone,
And to yield def'rence only to my elders:
Hence I advanced with an undaunted step.
He, with a fierce voice, cried: "Make way, or I . .
I, on the other hand, inflamed with rage,
Made answer to him thus: "Do thou retire."
Already had we met: he from his side
Unsheath'd a dagger, and upon me leap'd:
I had no dagger, but I lack'd not courage;
With a firm foot I waited his attack:
He then assail'd me; I repell'd his onset,
Grasp'd him, and in less time than I relate it,
Flung him upon the earth: in vain he strove;
I with my knees confined him to the ground:
In both my hands his right hand I imprison'd;
In vain he menaced, irresistibly
And firmly I deprived him of its use.
When to the contest he perceived himself
Inadequate, insidiously he feign'd
Terms of submission; I believed his words;
Quitted my grasp; when treach'rously a blow,
Such as thou see'st it here, he aim'd at me;

And pierced my clothes; the weapon grazed my flesh:
The wound was slight, but boundless was my rage:
Blind with revenge, I snatch'd the dagger from him; . . .
And welt'ring in his blood he lay transfix'd.
*Polyp.* If this be true, thou art a valiant youth.
*Ægis.* Scarce had my hand the fatal blow inflicted,
When I was stricken with o'erwhelming horror.
Unused to blood, I felt myself degraded;
I fear'd; yet knew not how I ought to act:
First in the stream I hurl'd the dagger; then
The thought occurr'd in the same stream to fling
The bleeding victim; thus, it seem'd to me,
I should defeat all chances of detection;
I did so.—Judge, if I am used to guilt;
Ah thoughtless! bloody as I was, I ran,
Unknowing whither, till I reach'd the bridge.
There by thy guards, whom I avoided not,
I was secured; and hither have they dragg'd me,—
I swear to thee I have confess'd the whole.
*Polyp.* Thy tale has all the character of truth:
I feel constrain'd to pity thee; but yet
Justice demands thy punishment. I will
Ascribe it to misfortune, not to cunning,
That thou the body gav'st, perchance half-living,
To the swift whirlpools of the rapid stream:
But thence, as thou thyself must be aware,
Thy fault is aggravated: if this were,
As thou assertest, some base renegade,
Of whom too many now swarm up and down,
The turbid progeny of civil strife,
It might avail thee much. Thy victim's name
Alone, would now perchance suffice to save thee.
*Ægis.* Wretch that I am! If I am doom'd to fall
The victim of involuntary error,
What can I say to thee, O king? Behold me
Ready to bear what punishment thou will'st.
I grieve for this mischance; but should grieve more,
Were I in fault. In my defence alone
My unsupported innocency pleads:
I boast no ancestry, I have no gold;
In all men's eyes I seem a malefactor:

And ah! I am so, to have left you thus,
My wretched parents, aged and infirm;
Thus to have disobey'd, deserted you,
Inflicted on you mortal agonies;
And, maybe, ere your time, cut short your lives.—
Ah! if he yet is living, my good father;
He, who bestow'd no heritage on me,
Save uncorrupted manners; he, who was
The lofty image and the bright example
Of human excellence; should he e'er hear
That, in Messene, for the crime of murder,
I was condemn'd to die, what would he say?
Ah! such a thought is far more terrible
To me than death.

*Polyp.* Hear me: thou knowest well,
Convicted as thou art of spilling blood,
Thy life immediately should pay the forfeit;
But yet thy simple undisguised confession
Inclines me to relent in thy behalf.
Till I have gain'd more certain information,
Both of thyself, and him whom thou hast slain,
I shall awhile suspend the final sentence . . .

## Scene III.

MEROPE, POLYPHONTES, ÆGISTHUS.

*Polyp.* Merope? . . . What! can it be possible?
Com'st thou to me? And for what purpose, say? . . .

*Me.* The tidings which I just have heard have brought me.
Is it, then, true that by the river's brink
A man was murder'd, and was afterwards
By the assassin to the stream committed? . . .

*Polyp.* 'Tis but too true: and here the murd'rer stands . . .

*Me.* What do I see? . . . O what a strange resemblance!

*Polyp.* Thou know'st with what anxiety I check
The least encroachment on internal peace:
Yet, if thou see'st this man, or hear'st him speak,
Thou almost wouldst pronounce him innocent.

*Me.* 'Tis true; his countenance is not like guilt:
His mien is noble . . . But, alas! he yet
With blood is reeking.

*Ægis.* Who denies it, lady?
This blood at first too certainly condemns me;
But had I been well versed in spilling blood,
I had been also versed in cleansing it:
A little water, and a dauntless face,
Might have eternally consign'd my crime
To a secure oblivion. But, believe me,
I feel a punishment far more severe
In my remorse, than that which now the king
Prepares for me. And yet what other course
Before me lay? Alone, unknown, a wand'rer,
I was not arm'd for any fatal purpose:
The sword I wrested from his hands myself,
Which 'gainst the fierce youth, in my own defence,
I was constrain'd to use . . . Ah! trust my words;
I ne'er was disciplined to bloody deeds.
*Me.* Was thy antagonist a youth?
*Ægis.* He was
Equal to me in age.
*Me.* What do I hear? . . .
*Polyp.* And if he speaks the truth, I should suspect
He was some questionable character.
Along a solitary path he ran,
As if to shun pursuit . . .
*Ægis.* I further now
Remember that at first in part he hid
His face beneath his robe . . .
*Me.* He hid his face? . . .
He fled? . . . —But thou, didst thou not know him?
*Ægis.* Here
I am a stranger totally; and he
(I have him still before me) seem'd to me
Also a stranger; . . . nay, he surely was so;
At least his dress bespake it, which appear'd
Rather like that of Elis than Messene.
*Me.* O Heav'ns! . . . Of Elis? . . .
*Ægis.* Yes; resembling mine;
For I too am from Elis . . .
*Me.* Thou? . . .
*Polyp.* But why
So anxious, so inquisitive? . . .

*Me.* What say'st thou?
I anxious? . . .
*Polyp.* So it seems to me.—In short,
A nameless stranger by another slain . . .
*Me.* Who knows what he might be? . . . True . . .
There's no reason
Why I should take an int'rest . . .
*Polyp.* For myself,
Were I by duty not constrain'd to do so,
I ne'er should listen to a cause like this.
Thou, dead to all affection, dost excite
In me no small surprise: how can this question
Interest thee? . . .
*Me.* In me, . . . 'twas . . . mere desire
To hear.—Yet it appears to me far more
The' effect of art than accident, that he
Should thus from all men have conceal'd the body:
And thou so lenient to this murderer,
Who thus undaunted in thy presence stands . . .
I know not . . .
*Ægis.* Fear induced me first to fling
The body in the stream; it was not art:
I stand undaunted, as a man should stand
Whose breast feels self-acquitted. Yet, alas!
I felt more wretchedness than thou suspectest;
And now much more so, since I see thee grieve,
Trembling, and apprehensive for the slain . . .
*Me.* I trembling, I? . . . I apprehensive? . . . No . . .
But those who are unhappy, quickly feel
Compassion for unhappiness in others.
*Ægis.* For me then feel compassion. I, alas!
Am far more wretched than the murder'd stranger;
And merit wretchedness far less than he.
Rash youth, 'twas he who, with no provocation,
First would have murder'd me. What profits it
That I subdued him, if I am condemn'd
With greater infamy to lose my life?
And if I lose it not, what can give pain,
As shame can give it, to a gen'rous heart?
*Me.* Thy low condition hides a noble soul:
Thy words almost compel me . . . Yet, . . . could I

Gain some intelligence, gain but the name
Of him whom thou hast murder'd...
*Polyp.* Since, to-day,
Thou feel'st an int'rest foreign to thy habits
In hearing this recital; since I see,
O Merope, that my continuance here
Restrains the free expression of thy thoughts,
I know not why...
*Me.* Restrains?... What dost thou mean?...
With thee I leave him.
*Polyp.* No. That from his mouth
Thou mayst learn more, if more there be to learn,
With thee I leave him. Thou art well aware
That I am ready, and much wish, to make thee
Of ev'ry question sov'reign arbitress;
Much more, then, art thou in a cause so trifling,
To thee do I refer him; of his fate
Do thou dispose at will. Let this now be
The earliest proof that thou despisest not
Each gift of mine.
*Me.* But what?...
*Polyp.* I pray thee yield.
Ah, might this be a prelude to thy reign!

### SCENE IV.

MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* Canst thou be less compassionate than he?
Does not my youth plead for me in thy favor?
Is not a pure heart written on my face?
Does not the grief of my distracted parents
Excite thy sympathy?... Alas!... Wert not
Thou also once a mother? Ah! for mine...
*Me.* Yes, I have been a mother,... to my cost!...
And yet, who knows?...—Thy mother, lives she still?...
A native, then, of Elis is thy father?
*Ægis.* No, of Messene.
*Me.* Of Messene? Ah!
What do I hear?
*Ægis.* I from my infancy
Have heard him so affirm.

*Me.* His name perchance
Is Polydore? . . .
*Ægis.* Cephisus is his name.
*Me.* His age? . . .
*Ægis.* Is great.
*Me.* O Heav'ns! . . .—But yet the name . . .—
And of what rank, what parents in Messene?
Knowest thou? Noble? . . .
*Ægis.* No: he was the master
Of a small farm, which with his own free hands
He loved to cultivate; a peaceful life,
Contented with his lot, he with his spouse
And children led.
*Me.* And what fatality
Drove him from such an enviable state?
Why did he change his dwelling?
*Ægis.* Oft he told me,
That by intestine quarrels of this realm
He had been forced to flight; that the revenge
Of potent enemies pursued his steps.
That all was bloodshed and disturbance here;
Whence trembling for his children . . . O how oft,
Dwelling on this, have I beheld the tears
Course down his aged cheeks!
*Me.* Thou wert then born
Here, in Messene? And thy father fled
To Elis with thee?
*Ægis.* No: my father carried
With him my elder brothers, who were all
Snatch'd from his arms by an untimely death.
I only, born of all his children last,
In Elis first inhaled the vital air;—
O wretched father! I the last remain:
If I indeed remain to thee!—A wish,
E'en from my earliest years, possess'd my heart
To see Messene; since it was my father's,
It almost seems to me my native place.
*Me.* O Heav'ns! . . . What words are these? . . . —And
he like thee
Is youthful . . . of an age resembling thine . . .
And such deportment, . . . such expressive mien . . .

He seems; and yet he is not.—But erewhile
Thou said'st, thy victim also came from Elis.
*Ægis.* Such my conjecture.
*Me.* Seem'd he in disguise?
*Ægis.* He did.
*Me.* In temper? . . .
*Ægis.* Arrogant.
*Me.* In dress? . . .
*Ægis.* Abject.
*Me.* A fugitive? . . .
*Ægis.* Swift, as pursued,
And with suspicion in his looks, he ran
Tow'rds me.
*Me.* Barbarian, and thou then hast slain him?
*Ægis.* He would have murder'd me.
*Me.* And said he nought
To thee in death?
*Ægis.* I weeping o'er him stood
A little while . . . In death's last pangs he lay . . .
*Me.* Ah wretched youth! . . .
*Ægis.* Yes . . . now . . . I recollect; . . .
That, all his native fierceness laid aside,
Sobbing, in tearful accents, he invoked
His mother's name.
*Me.* His mother's name? And thou,
Perfidious wretch, and thou indeed hast slain him?
And cast his body in the eddying stream?
Alas! . . . He's lost . . .
*Ægis.* Unhappy that I am!
What have I done? Does then this crime of mine
In any wise touch thee?—Thou hast for this
Full sanction from the king, dispose of me;
And wreak on me a plenary revenge.—
O Heav'ns! how was it possible for me
Thee to offend, O Merope, whom ever
My heart revered?—Thy strange calamities
I from my father learn'd: and oft, with his,
My tears would mingle at the sad recital:
An ardent longing to enjoy thy presence
My soul conceived. Oft with my aged father
I put up vows for thee to Heav'n; with hands

That then were innocent, I often flung
Pure incense in the flame that burn'd for thee
Before my humble Lares.—And have I
Offended thee? Ah, punish me: at once
I merit it, I ask it, and I will it.—
But, how could he, whom 'twas my fate to slay,
Who to ferocity of manners join'd
A cruel heart, at all belong to thee? . . .
But p'rhaps appearances belied his nature:
And dire necessity disfigured thus
A gentle spirit . . . Ah! what have I said?
He, if thou pityest him, is innocent;
I only am the culprit; ah! on me
Wreak, wreak thy vengeance.
*Me.* —But what words are these!
What lofty sorrow! . . . What can all this mean?
In spite of my resolve he forces me
To weep with him.—Thou sayest that thy father
Oft spake to thee of me?
*Ægis.* How many times
Of thee, of thy slain consort, of thy sons
Did he make mention to me!
*Me.* Of my sons? . . .
O Heav'ns! . . .
*Ægis.* Yes; of three sons of thine, all slain
By the atrocious and usurping tyrant,
Whose fierce demeanor on this very spot
Smote me just now with fear. Severity,
However unrelenting, shown by thee,
To me were far more grateful than his pity.
*Me.* —His words deprive me of all self-command.
Scarce do I yield my bosom to compassion,
When insupportable and horrid doubts
Impel me to revenge: scarce do I cease
To feel compassion, when, if I behold,
Or hear him, I am re-impell'd to tears.
*Ægis.* What secret conflict hast thou in thy heart?
Thou speakest to thyself? Do I excite
Thy pity? Why dost thou not listen to it?
*Me.* Alas! what shall I do?—I neither can,
O youth, condemn thee, nor can I acquit thee.

Meanwhile remain within the palace: I,
Ere long, once more will see thee. Ponder well;
And ponder o'er again within thyself
The most minute transactions of thy life:
Remember, too, each gesture, look, and word
Of thy antagonist. Recall to mind
Also each least expression of thy father.—
But, art thou certain that the good old man
Ne'er changed his name? Speak.
*Ægis.* I am certain of it.
E'en when a child, I used to lisp Cephisus.
When afterwards he told me that he fled
An exile from Messene, and commanded,
That I from ev'ry one should keep this secret,
He also would have told his real name,
If that had been disguised: full well he knew
That even at the risk of my own life,
I should have held such a disclosure sacred.
I told thee that his birth-place was Messene;
But could I anything conceal from thee?
*Me.* Let this suffice; desist from further speech.—
I feel constrain'd to leave thee for a time,
To give relief to my long-pent-up tears.—
This palace I assign to thee meanwhile
As thy sole prison. I again ere long
Shall hear thee; and thou shalt repeat the whole:
Shalt answer to each question by itself;
At length, distinctly, word by word, shalt answer:
May I find truth in thee . . . But, thine is not
The aspect or deportment of imposture.

## Scene V.

ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* . . . What can this mean? Whence is it that my words
Excite such strong emotions in her heart?
Now, with a look more furious than a tiger's,
Tow'rds me she springs: now she addresses me
With more than e'en a mother's tenderness;
Beaming with softness, and suffused with pity,

Her anxious eyes she fix'd on me, and wept.
Whence can my slain antagonist awake
Such deep affliction in her? Were she not,
Had she not long since been, a childless mother,
I should suspect that I had slain her son.
But yet, who knows? . . . P'rhaps some adopted child
Was dear to her: or p'rhaps she waited then
Some helper to her plans; and . . . But in vain
Are my surmises; I know nothing.—Now,
Ægisthus, thou see'st clearly; now thou see'st,
Whether thy good and agèd father spake
With truth to thee: "Never debase thyself
To look with envy on the great; they are
More wretched than ourselves." 'Tis too, too true:
Nor ought I now to quarrel with my fate,
Whate'er that fate may be, when I behold
A lady so illustrious, now deserted,
Doom'd to a life of such calamity.—
But 'tis already night: since from these walls
I am prohibited from venturing forth,
To some interior chamber of this palace
Let me advance: and cleanse me of this blood.
Ah! that I thus could wash away my crime!—
But Heav'n, who knows whate'er I've done, is just:
And, if I merit it, let Heav'n chastise me.

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## ACT III.

### Scene I.

POLYDORE.

*Pol.* Here with the dawn I come: and deem myself
Most fortunate, that no one saw me enter.—
Ah cruel palace, after three long lustres,
At length once more I see thee. Full of fear
I left thee, on the day that in my arms
I bore the only son of my good king,
The precious remnant of his sacred blood,
To a secure asylum: but, impress'd

With a far diff'rent terror I return . . .
Alas! too certainly this is the girdle
Which once Cresphontes wore! This is his clasp;
Here is the impress graven by Alcides:
This precious pledge my careful hands retain'd
Full fourteen years. Now twenty moons have waned,
Since to his side I fasten'd it myself.
Ah inconsiderate, impetuous youth!
Thou wouldst not hear me; to my wary counsels
Thy ears were deaf . . . Behold the consequence! . . .
O days of anxious suffering for me!
Now for a year I've lost thee; and in vain
I have already for six tedious months
Thy footsteps traced; and now, as I approach
Thy native country, on the river's brink,
By a deserted path, I find thy girdle
Drench'd in a sea of blood? Unhappy I! . . .
What can I now attempt? . . . But first I hope
To meet with Merope. Ah, may kind Heav'n
Present me to her, ere I meet the tyrant!
This is my only wish. What have I now
Left for myself to fear? What life to lose,
If of my young Cresphontes I'm bereft? . . .
And yet, who knows? . . . Perchance I am deceived . . .
Perchance . . . But how can it e'er be? . . . His mother
May know of it . . . And if she knows it not? . . .
Ah! how can I e'er dare impart to her
A tale so dire? . . . Yet, how conceal it from her?
O Heav'ns! . . . But some one comes; let me fly hence . . .
But no; a woman hitherward advances; . . .
Alone advances; . . . and she seems to me, . . .
Ah! yes . . . 'tis Merope . . . Let me accost her.

## Scene II.

MEROPE, POLYDORE.

*Pol.* O queen!
*Me.* Who in this place can thus address me? . . .
Who art thou, good old man? . . . What do I see?
Is't thou? . . . Do I mistake not? . . . Polydore?
*Pol.* Yes . . .

*Me.* Speak: my son! . . . Dost bring me life, . . .
or death?
*Pol.* . . . At length . . . again I see thy face . . . At length
I print a kiss upon thy sacred hand.
*Me.* Tell me . . . My son . . .
*Pol.* O Heav'ns! . . . —Can I speak here?
*Me.* Thou mayst speak now; we are unseen by any;
I am accustom'd, ere the dawn, to go
Each morning, unattended, to weep yonder,
Upon the tomb of my adored Cresphontes.
*Pol.* O tomb of the most excellent of kings!
Ah! that I there might on it breathe my last!
*Me.* Be quick, and tell me . . . Thou dost make me
tremble . . .
Wherefore delay? And why return so sad?
Say, hast thou found him? Hast thou traced his steps?
Speak: 'tis six moons since thou didst go from Elis;
Now is the year fulfill'd, whose ev'ry day
Has seem'd a day of death.
*Pol.* Unhappy I!
Think what is my distress . . . Thou never then
Hast heard of him? . . .
*Me.* Ah no! . . . But thou? . . .
*Pol.* The half
Of Greece I've traversed; love, hope, strong desire,
Gave a new strength to my exhausted age:
I visited Cyllene, and Olympia,
Corinth, and Lacedæmon, Pylus, Argos,
With many other cities; nor gain'd once
Intelligence of him: his ardent youth,
And his adventurous spirit, who can tell
How far they may have carried him?—Ah, son! . . .
The wish in thee was evermore too strong
To travel, and to learn: O worthy offspring
Of great Alcides, my too scanty hut
Contain'd thee not. Though thou wert utterly
Unconscious of thy birth, each look of thine,
Each thought betray'd thee . . .
*Me.* When I hear thee speak,
What various impulses I prove at once!
Ah! where, where art thou, son? . . . Thou speakest truth?
He grew up worthy of his ancestors?

*Pol.* Worthy? O Heav'ns! A temper more sincere,
More noble, modest, and magnanimous,
I never saw: and so well form'd in person;
In character so vigorous; in mien
So masculine; and so humane in heart:—
What was there not in thee? Sole solace thou
Of my old age; my ancient consort lived
In thee; in thee alone I also lived:
Far more to us, than son . . . Ah! in our midst
Had he been seen by thee! . . . As in his heart
He felt his lofty birth, with gentle sway
He ruled us at his will: but evermore
That will was just and gen'rous.—Ah, my son!
The' involuntary tears gush from my eyes
Whene'er I think of thee.
*Me.* . . . With joy and grief
Thou also makest me to weep at once.
O Heav'ns! . . . and when shall I see thee again?
O when? . . . Ah, son, am I then doom'd to know
Thy many precious qualities, while now
I cannot know how far thou wanderest?
*Pol.* What was my suff'ring never to be able
To give thee further tidings of his fate,
Than that he lived! But confidence was here
Most perilous: I scarcely dared dispatch
The covenanted token to inform thee
That he had left me, and that afterwards
I sought to trace his footsteps.
*Me.* Fatal token!
Ah! hadst thou never reach'd me! . . . From that day
I have had peace no more . . . What do I say? . . .
Peace? . . . Ah! thou knowest not . . . Tremendous fears,
Doubts, apprehensions, and false dreams, or true,
By thousands and by thousands shake my soul.
No more in quiet sleep I close my eyes:
But if, o'ercome by weariness, perforce
The failing pow'rs of nature briefly drowse,
E'en more than lengthy vigils, frightful dreams
Exhaust what little of my strength remains.
Now I behold him as a mendicant
Wand'ring alone, unused to cope with toils,
The victim of an unpropitious fate;

Clad in a squalid garb, the laughing-stock
Of arrogant prosperity, debased
By infamous repulses . . . Hapless I! . . .
Now I behold him on the brink of death,
'Mid roaring billows of the foaming sea;
Now hands and feet with servile fetters laden;
And now assaulted, mangled, massacred
By fierce assassins . . . O great Heav'ns! . . . my heart
At ev'ry instant throbs; and when by chance
I hear of men unknown, who have endured
The outrages of fortune, I reflect
That each of these may be my son; and tremble,
Believe it so, and shudder: and escape
From out one martyrdom, to feel some other.—
Couldst thou believe it? Yesterday a youth,
Who in a private quarrel lifeless fell
Upon the river's bank, and afterwards
Was, from the fear of him who wrought the deed,
Into the river cast, my spirits troubled;
And still does trouble them. He was a stranger . . .
*Pol.* Slain? . . . Yesterday? . . . A stranger? . . . By the stream? . . .
O Heav'ns! . . .
*Me.* But what! thou tremblest? Speak to me . . .
My fears perchance were true? . . . Alas! . . . thou weepest? . . .
Thou waxest pale? . . . And scarcely canst thou stand?
*Pol.* —Alas! What should I do? what say to her? . . .
*Me.* Thou mutt'rest? Speak to me. — What are thy thoughts?
What know'st thou? What dost fear? I would hear all:
Ah! rescue me from doubt; . . .
*Pol.* I cannot speak; . . .
Both strength . . . and utt'rance . . . fail me . . .
*Me.* I'm o'erwhelm'd . . .
All courage now to question thee is fled . . .
But yet, I will; I will know e'en the worst.
Why should I longer languish on in life,
If I have ceased to be a mother? Speak;
Thou know'st it all; the victim . . .
*Pol.* I know nothing . . .

*Me.* Speak; I command thee.
*Pol.* . . . Dost thou know . . . this . . . girdle?
*Me.* O sight! With fresh blood it is reeking yet?
O Heav'ns! It is the girdle of Cresphontes . . .
I understand . . . I . . . faint . . .
*Pol.* . . . At dawn of day
Erewhile I found it on the river's bank,
Swimming in blood: some one was slain there; ah!
There is no doubt; it was thy son.
*Me.* . . . What death! . . .
O cruel destiny! . . . And I still live? . . .—
But thou, thus didst thou keep a pledge so sacred?
Infatuate that I was! in whom have I
Reposed my hopes, my life? Was't not thy duty
To stand inseparably at his side?
What weapon should have murder'd him, that first
Had not cut short thy long and useless life?
Say, hast thou served me thus? And thus loved him? . . .—
But, ah! thou weepest? And repliest not?
Yes, 'tis the blow of destiny alone:
Ah! pardon me: I am a mother . . . No,
A mother now no more! . . . To die . . .
*Pol.* Ah me!
I merit all thy anger . . . Heav'n, though, knows
That faultless . . .
*Me.* Ah! my heart forewarn'd me of it . . .
In that disastrous night, when in thy arms
I placed him: . . . Thou wilt never see him more . . .
With his infantine hands, so eagerly
He clasp'd my neck; O Heav'ns! it seem'd that then
He knew our separation was eternal.—
Where are ye fled, ye lustres three, dragg'd on
In tears, in fruitless hope, in racking fear?
So many, and so many woes endured;
The odious sight of Polyphontes borne;
That I at last should lose my all at once?
And in what manner! . . . And before my eyes! . . .
By ruffian hands . . . deprived of sepulture . . .
O son, dear son, at least thy lifeless body
Should have been given me, that 'mid embraces
And tears, I might at least . . . have died upon it! . . .

*Pol.* And I,... three lustres of paternal care
To see thus torn away from me? Alas!
I come to pierce thy heart... And yet,... could I
Hide it from thee?
*Me.* To die; nought else remains...

## Scene III.

POLYPHONTES, MEROPE, POLYDORE.

*Polyp.* Brought hither by the unaccustom'd sound
Of more than common sorrow, I approach:
What may this mean?—Say, who art thou, old man?
What tidings hast thou brought?
*Me.* Now, quickly come,
O tyrant, at the sound of woe; of woe,
Such as thou heardest in this very palace,
The day that death pursued thy steps. O thou,
Who with the woes of others feed'st thy heart,
Exult now: thou at length beholdest me
Utterly desolate.
*Polyp.* Ah!—Then he lived,
That son, whom thou affirmedst to be slain?
*Me.* O thou unwary tyrant! couldst thou deem,
Since I endured to live, my son was dead?
What life I led, thou knowest; evermore
Constrain'd to see thee... Yes; he was alive;
I hid it from thee; and the only hope
I cherish'd in my breast, was, that one day
I here should see him as the dreaded foe
Of impious men, the thunderbolt of Heaven,
The' avenger of his father, and his brethren,
Of me, and his hereditary throne.—
Had this not been, should I have e'er endured
To hear thy words one instant, more offensive
When they presumed to offer terms of peace,
And overtures of execrable love,
Than when they threaten'd me with bonds and death?
*Polyp.* To him who wish'd thee partner of his throne,
Giv'st thou such recompense? O lady, I,
Who hear myself by thee proclaim'd a tyrant,
Am far less fierce than thou. Yes, I knew well,

I knew thy son was living; nor didst thou
Deceive me . . . But, meanwhile thy just distress
I pardon: maybe soon the day will come . . .—
But, art thou certain of this news? Where was
This son of thine? And whence does he come here,
This messenger? . . . Methinks thy face is not
Quite new to me; methinks . . .

*Pol.* Thou knowest me:
Attentively survey me; oft hast thou
Beheld me in attendance on thy king
Cresphontes. I am Polydore: when others
To an usurper bent their servile brows,
Messene I abandon'd. Look at me:
These locks, 'tis true, are whiter than they were;
This form more bent from length of years; this face
By hardships, and by suff'rings now impress'd
With hues of death: but still I am the same;
Still thy most mortal foe. I saved from thee
My monarch's only son: I nourish'd him,
I educated him; for him resign'd
My natal soil: and honors forfeited,
And wealth, and my loved country lost for him,
All these privations were more dear to me
Than loftiest rank, with homage to a tyrant.—
Alas! why did I not with him expire! . . .
If thou dost thirst for vengeance on the past,
Wreak it on me: leave Merope to weep
In liberty; and from my wretched life,
Which now is almost spent, deliver me.
Nought now afflicts me, but that I no more
Can give to-day the active years of youth
To the pure blood of my own rightful kings;
But this the trembling remnant of my life,
Such as it is, I offer it; do thou
Confirm the sacrifice.

*Polyp.* Thou dost excite
My pity, not my wrath: thou hast well done
In going thus to voluntary exile.
To a rebellious subject I award
No other punishment. Thou'rt criminal,
Not for the rescued child, which was indeed

A gen'rous enterprise, but for the end,
The dreadful end for which thou didst preserve him.
When I discomfited thy lord in fight,
It was thy duty, in the camp, that day
To take my life; or then to die for him.—
Yet now I unreservedly forget
Whate'er is past . . . But, feign'd intelligence
Dost thou not bring insidiously? Now tell,
When, where, and how, he died . . .
*Me.* And art thou not
Content to know he's dead? Wouldst thou perchance
Also behold him? Wouldst thou reassure
Thy apprehensive and ignoble heart
With the atrocious sight? And view a mother
Shed tears of blood upon her lifeless son?
Go then; and fetch him from the river's bed,
Where, not an honor'd, but a quiet tomb,
He has obtain'd, and drag him through Messene;
Insults, which thou couldst not, when living, give him,
Inflict on him when dead; go. He, who was
Erewhile assassinated, was my son.
*Polyp.* And shall I trust this tale? Wert thou with him?
Say. How? . . .
*Pol.* Alas, indeed, I came too late!
Ah! this assassin should have slain me with him.
I never saw him . . .
*Polyp.* How then dost thou know it?
*Pol.* Behold; this is his girdle, formerly
The cincture of Cresphontes; with his blood
Still is it reeking; in a sea of blood
I found it by the river: dost thou know it?
Feast on it thy fierce eyes.—A youth, unknown,
A stranger, and from Elis . . . Heav'ns! if only
It had not been the same!
*Me.* Soon will my death
Convince thee that 'tis he.—But thou, perchance,
Who here feign'st ignorance, didst in that place
His murder foul contrive . . . Why say, perchance?
There is no doubt of it. A short time since
Thou tranquilly didst talk with the assassin:

Whence sprang that pity which he raised in thee,
If not begotten by thy cruel joy?
Ah! yes; he was thy messenger . . .
*Polyp.* Canst thou
Be so deluded, Merope? I swear,
I never saw him. If thy son came here
Conceal'd, alone, a fugitive, disguised,
How could I ever know him? He who slew him,
How could he recognize him, if to him,
Not less than to myself, he was unknown?
Wouldst thou have further proofs? Didst thou thyself
Not feel compassion for the murderer?
Did I not leave him with thee? At thy will
Didst thou not question him? The arbitress,
Did I not make thee, of his destiny?
*Me.* If then thou art not guilty of the crime,
The wicked culprit now is in thy power
Within these palace walls: revenge alone
Can now protract my life a few brief moments.
Grant now that I may quickly see him fall
Upon the tomb of unavenged Cresphontes;
There, midst a thousand and a thousand torments,
Let me behold him his perfidious soul
Breathe forth in death: and then . . .
*Polyp.* With equity
I might award a recompense to one
Who slew a vile assassin that approach'd
With circumventive arts to murder me:
But yet I will myself avenge the death
Of my invet'rate foe (thus learn that thou
Aspersest me unjustly): for that death
I promise thee a plenary atonement . . .
*Me.* Severe and unexampled, swift and dreadful,
I will that it should be: never till now
I ask'd of thee a boon: be this from thee,
As 'tis the first to me, the latest favor . . .
But, speak'st thou truly? . . . I can scarcely trust thee . . .
With all the blood of that ferocious man
I'll satisfy my eyes . . . What do I say?
My eyes? I will myself inflict the blow;
I will within that heart a thousand times

Immerge the dagger . . . That atrocious heart,
That heard my son, with his expiring voice,
In lamentable tones, invoke his mother . . .
He heard him; yet he toss'd him in the stream,
P'rhaps yet half living; p'rhaps in such a state,
That even then he might have been deliver'd
From death's tremendous jaws . . . And he erewhile
Recounted this to me; I listen'd to him;
And almost thought him innocent; thus more
The murd'rer than the murder'd woke my pity.—
Pity? Yes, now will I atone for it:
Such an example will I make of him,
As never yet was heard of; I myself:
This thou didst promise me; now answer me:
Wilt thou not keep thy word?

*Polyp.* Thou shalt thyself
Here speedily wreak on him what revenge
Pleases thee best. Ah! might his blood abate
Within thy heart the hate it bears towards me!
Ah, may thy indignation utterly
Exhaust itself in him! I fly from hence
To execute thy wish: no longer now
Will I intrude upon thy just distress;
But quickly I return, at least in part
To solace it.—Meanwhile do thou not quit her:
Pity in thee I do not reprehend:
But for the mother feel it, if thou hast
Felt it so much already for the son.

## Scene IV.

POLYDORE, MEROPE.

*Pol.* O come to thy apartments now, I pray thee;
Permit me, Merope, to take advantage
Of the importunate and tardy pity
Of the fierce tyrant; at thy feet permit me,
Weeping with thee, and speaking of thy son,
To breathe my last . . . May I see him avenged,
And afterwards expire!—Come; thou must feel it;
With grief and indignation thou'rt exhausted,
And thy knees fail beneath thy weight. If thou

Refusest all repose to thy worn frame,
Thou wilt not live to witness that revenge
Thy soul so much desires.
*Me.* —May I but see it!

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## ACT IV.

### SCENE I.

ÆGISTHUS.

*Ægis.* The king commands that I await him here?
My fate is then irrevocably seal'd:
Whate'er it be, I fearlessly expect it.
My only consolation is to know
That I am innocent. But, evermore
(If haply longer life be spared to me)
'Twill be to me in all vicissitudes
Haunted by bitter thoughts: eternally
That murder'd man will stand before mine eyes.—
If in my heart I cherish flatt'ring hopes
Of pardon, Heav'n knows why I cherish them.
Belovèd father! for thyself alone,
And once more to behold thee, I desire
A longer life; to give thee back that peace
Of which I robb'd thee; with my pious hands
To close for thee thine agèd dying eyes:
For too assuredly thy failing life
Is drawing to its close! . . . Ungrateful son!
Perchance thyself hast forwarded his death! . . .

### SCENE II.

POLYDORE, ÆGISTHUS.

*Pol.* It seems that Merope is somewhat calm'd,
Waiting the tyrant's coming: to that tomb
Meanwhile will I repair . . .
*Ægis.* What voice is that? . . .
*Pol.* There offer up my vows . . .

*Ægis.* Heav'ns! Is it true?
Do I behold that venerable man? . . .
*Pol.* There shed some pious tears . . .
*Ægis.* I'm not deceived;
His snowy locks; his gait; the self-same garb . . ..
Turn this way, good old man! . . .
*Pol.* Who calls me thus?
*Ægis.* Ah, father! . . .
*Pol.* Whom see I? O Heav'ns! Thou here?
Thou living? Where, then, am I doom'd to find thee!
Ah! hide thyself. I tremble . . . Wretched youth! . . .
Thou art undone.
*Ægis.* Ah! suffer first that I
A thousand times enfold thee to my bosom.
Doubtless for me, O father, thou hast placed
Thy feet within Messene, where thou hast
So many foes; thou dost for me incur
So great a risk . . . O Heav'ns! an impious son
Am I; I merit not such proofs of love:
Too much I err'd in leaving thee.
*Pol.* Alas! . . .
Choked by my tears . . . I cannot . . . speak . . . to thee . . .
Ah, hide thyself . . . Fly hence . . . Thou art . . . Thy risk
Is imminent . . . How cam'st thou in Messene?
How in this palace? . . .
*Ægis.* In a luckless hour
Thou findest me, O father: in these walls
I am a prisoner . . . My heart is rent
In being forced now to confess to thee,
That on the very verge perchance I stand
Of being sentenced as a homicide
To ignominious punishment. Perchance,
I yet may be absolved, for innocent
I am, although indeed a homicide . . ,
Ah! what a son hast thou regain'd in me!
*Pol.* O unexpected destiny! Didst thou
Then kill the stranger on the river's brink? . . .
*Ægis.* I kill'd him, yes; but in my own defence.
*Pol.* O fatal blow! . . . O my paternal cares! . . .
Ah, tell me; . . . see if any one can hear us.

*Ægis.* As far as I can see, no soul is near:
That passage, which leads hither from the palace,
With guards is crowded; but they are remote;
They cannot hear us.—But, what wouldst thou say,
O father, that I do not know already?
Behold me, prostrate at thy feet I fall:
Ah! long ere this, repentant in my heart,
I've wept, and weep again, that I have caused thee
Such mortal anguish. I know all already:
What do I not deserve? How could I quit
A father so indulgent and so tender! . . .
Ah! if I e'er return to see again
Our dear domestic hearth, O, never more
Will I, I swear to thee, one step depart
From thy protecting presence; . . . My loved mother,
With her how fares it, say? . . . She weeps for me; . . .
I seem to hear and see her; . . . and I weep . . .

*Pol.* O son! . . . compel me not to shed these tears . . .
'Tis not the time . . . I would . . .

*Ægis.* I ask myself:
Did any one here see thee? Thou must be
To many known; . . . O, what if recognized? . . .
For thee alone I tremble . . . To what risk
Have I exposed thee? . . . Ah! retire with me
To where I, weeping, pass'd this tedious night;
There let me hide thee till the close of day.
Ah! if the tyrant should discover thee! . . .
And at the same time if he should find out
That I'm thy son! . . . Come: yet I feel some hope:
For Polyphontes is not now possess'd
With rage intractable; and in my cause
I found e'en Merope inclined to mercy:
Hence I am justified in hoping yet
Pardon for my involuntary crime.

*Pol.* O Heav'ns! . . . Did Merope herself? . . . To thee? . . .
It now behoves me that I speak to him
Briefly, but fully . . . Ah! . . . . What can I do? . . .
What say to him? . . . And what conceal from him?—
Withdraw thyself at least for a short time . . .

*Ægis.* In vain were the attempt; I should be sought for;

I was commanded to wait here. But, why
Conceal myself? . . .
*Pol.* Thou never didst incur
Danger more imminent; and I ne'er felt
Such mortal anguish. Merope herself
Has sworn thy death: and Polyphontes here
Amid his minions comes with Merope.
Herself would be thy executioner;
As the assassin of her only son
Merope deems thee.
*Ægis.* What have I, then, done?
A son remain'd to her? a son? and I
Have robb'd her of him?—Ah! come here, come here,
Disconsolate mother; thy just wrath appease
In this perfidious heart. What punishment,
What death, what infamy, deserve I not?
*Pol.* But, . . . thou . . . art not . . . the murd'rer . . . of her son.
*Ægis.* Then?
*Pol.* Thou art not . . .
*Ægis.* But what does this avail?
She thinks me so: she is a childless mother,
Of her last hope bereft: 'twill be a solace
To her distress to sacrifice my life;
Then let her come . . .
*Pol.* Ah no! . . . She of her son
Is not bereft.
*Ægis.* But he whom I have slain . . .—
At all risks I will see her; hear her . . .
*Pol.* Fly . . .
*Ægis.* I will not; and I cannot.
*Pol.* Or at least . . .
*Ægis.* But if I am not then . . .
*Pol.* Thou art . . . that son
Whom she laments as dead.
*Ægis.* I? What dost tell me? . . .
I am? . . . Thou not my father? Am I then
Sprung from Alcides' blood?
*Pol.* O Heav'ns! . . . be silent!
Though not my son, to me thou'rt more than son.
I rescued thee from hence; I brought thee up

Under the feign'd name of Ægisthus; I
Preserved thee, wretched that I am, perchance
For a more cruel fate.
*Ægis.* O mystery,
Evermore, hitherto, to me profound,
Impenetrable! Yes, for Merope,
Whene'er I saw her, in myself I felt
I know not what of indefinable,
Confused, and unimaginable love;
And at the same time felt tow'rds Polyphontes
More indignation and antipathy,
Than ever yet mere tyranny excited.
Yes, now I recollect, now I behold,
Now comprehend it all. Thy name is not
Cephisus.
*Pol.* It is Polydore. At once
My name and rank I hid from thee: I fear'd
The indiscrétion of thy youth: but how
Could any one foresee? . . . Meanwhile, O Heav'ns!
Time passes, and ere long . . . Ah! if I could
Give Merope a timely warning . . .
*Ægis.* Heav'n,
Which o'er my life hath hitherto alone
Seem'd to preside; that Heav'n which rescued me,
An infant, from the vigilant revenge
Of a bloodthirsty tyrant; Heav'n which lent
The heart of youth to thy old age, the strength,
The enterprise, the courage; shall it be
That Heav'n now leaves me by the very hands
Of my own mother to be sacrificed?—
Shall I, who am the offspring of Alcides,
If there be one who with a sword will arm
This strong right hand, shall I permit myself
To be affrighted by an abject tyrant? . . .
*Pol.* Ah, youth! thou seeest nothing but thy valor;
But I behold thy danger. To deceive
Merope more completely, and abate
The gen'ral hatred, crafty Polyphontes
Now feigns a pity for that very son,
Whom, if within his pow'r, he would have slain.
But, if the base usurper should behold him

Restored to life, he will at once resume
His bloody and ferocious character;
And thou wilt fall his victim. Ah! now leave me;
I will fly swiftly Merope to meet:
P'rhaps yet I may be able . . . Ah! if I
Arrived in time! . . .
*Ægis.* Methinks that I behold
Soldiers approaching us . . .
*Pol.* Alas! What see I?
With Polyphontes Merope approaches . . .
*Ægis.* And after them a train of armèd men . . .
*Pol.* What shall I do? . . . Stand at my side, O son; . . .
I swear at least to die in thy defence.—

## Scene III.

POLYPHONTES, MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS, POLYDORE, PEOPLE, SOLDIERS.

*Polyp.* Within thy hands, behold, O Merope,
The vile destroyer of thy son I place.
Let him be manacled with heavy chains;
And, at a nod from thee, be forthwith slain.
*Me.* Ah miscreant! barbarous, atrocious wretch!
Assassin vile! hast thou imbrued thy hands
In the pure blood of my belovèd son?
What now avails it that I spill all thine?
Can all thy blood redeem one drop of his?—
I, who already was so much afflicted!
And thou, beyond all women and all mothers,
Hast render'd me incomparably wretched.—
Rivet those iron chains; prepare for him
Horrid and unexampled agonies:
Let him breathe forth his soul 'mid dreadful torments.
I will behold his burning tears gush forth:
I will myself inflict on him, not one,
But thousand horrid deaths.—Ah, Merope,
Alas! Will this restore to thee thy son?
*Ægis.* O Merope, I yield myself to thee:
Yes, to a mother willingly I yield,
So justly desperate: and, if in chains
They had not bound me, thou hadst well sufficed
To wreak on me what torments please thee best.

Just is thy indignation . . . Yet, thou knowest
That guiltless, and e'en worthy of compassion,
Erewhile I seem'd to thee.
*Me.* I? . . . felt for thee? . . .
Compassion? . . .—Yet those accents on my heart,
Whence is their unknown pow'r? . . .—Why thus delay?
What pity do I feel? What words were those?
Let us depart; and drag him to that tomb:
The father's shade, and those of his slain sons,
May by his blood be pacified; . . . and mine;
For I shall quickly follow them.
*Polyp.* One instant
Be pleased yet to suspend.—Soldiers, and you,
Messenians, witnesses I wish you all
Of this just solemn act.—Clandestinely
This angry mother to my detriment
Conceal'd a son: yet not the less I feel
Compassion for her grief; and I attest
The righteous gods, that had she, when alive,
With gen'rous confidence reveal'd him to me,
I had, as though he were a son of mine,
Watch'd over his well-being constantly:
Dead, 'tis my duty to avenge that son.—
Ye hear?—Forthwith be Merope obeyed:
One victim is but little for such grief.
*Ægis.* Ah! a far diff'rent victim is required
To calm Cresphontes' shade.
*Me.* What sayest thou?
Let us depart . . .
*Pol.* I pray thee, pause a little . . .
I would impart to thee . . . Ah! hear me . . .
*Me.* Why
Speakest thou thus in whispers? Thou wert once
Devoted to Cresphontes; of his son
Thou wert the guardian: dost thou now repent
Of thy fidelity? And what? dost thou
Grieve for the murd'rer? . . . Feel'st thou pity for him? . . .
And pray'st thou that the blow? . . .
*Pol.* I? . . . pity? . . . no . . .
But, thou'rt a mother . . . Pause . . . Now more at length

Thou shouldst from him himself hear many things
About thy son.
*Polyp.* This youth, then, knew that son? . . .
*Me.* What can I hear?—What dar'st thou to propose?
Hop'st thou to mitigate my rage? Did he
Not slay my son? Didst thou not tell me so?
Did not himself confess it? This his belt,
Reeking with blood, placed in my hands by thee,
Does that not give assurance of the fact?
*Ægis.* That belt is mine, I swear to thee. Unclasp'd
I lost it from my side . . .
*Pol.* P'rhaps there might be
Another like to this . . . That murder'd youth . . .
P'rhaps he was not thy son . . .
*Me.* What new deceit
Am I compell'd to hear! . . . Ah, guilty tyrant!
Then hast thou all corrupted? Even him,
So faithful to us once? As in defiance,
Wouldst thou the' assassin of my son preserve,
And feign'st to wish him slain? and means like these? . . .
*Polyp.* O lady, thou'rt distracted by thy grief.
Who cannot here perceive? . . .
*Me.* If then, in truth,
Thou dost desire his death, there now remains
No more for me to hear. E'en now I hold
My rage restrain'd no longer: all delay
Will turn this tide of passion 'gainst myself.
Wherefore advance we farther? On these thresholds
Where equally my immolated spouse
Is witness to the deed: without delay
Let him be pacified.—To me that sword;
Myself, . . . with my own arm will strike thee now . . .
*Ægis.* Bared to thy blow behold my breast. Ah, mother! . . .
*Pol.* Pause . . .
*Me.* Let him die.
*Pol.* Ah! stay . . .
*Polyp.* Thus darest thou?
*Me.* Perfidious one! . . . What now? . . . Thou weepest, tremblest? . . .
And I, I cannot smite him! . . .

*Polyp.* What means this?
What secret have we here? Speak, old man, speak.
*Pol.* For pity's sake . . .
*Polyp.* Speak.
*Me.* Let me smite him now . . .
*Pol.* He is . . .
*Me.* Who, who?
*Polyp.* Quick, speak . . .
*Pol.* He . . . is my son.
*Me.* Ah! how? . . .
*Polyp.* This youth thy son?
*Ægis.* He was my father.
*Me.* He lies:—But, if he were, he slew my son.
Die, then.
*Pol.* Ah! pause . . . He is thy son.
*Ægis.* O mother . . .
*Me.* O Heav'ns!
*Polyp.* Her son? . . .
*Pol.* Thou art a mother; save him.
*Me.* My son! . . .
*Polyp.* What plot is this? Quick, guards, advance . . .
*Me.* I am thy shield, O son . . . Ah, yes, of this
My heart assures me; I am yet a mother . . .
*Polyp.* Soldiers . . .
*Me.* No sword that has not first pierced me,
Shall touch his form . . .
*Ægis.* I clasp thee in my arms,
O mother! . . .
*Polyp.* Now, what lies dost thou bring here,
Thou vile inventor of these worn-out fables?
An infamous assassin, one who also
Denies not that he is such, he thy son?
Shall I believe it? Guards, dispatch him quickly.
*Me.* Infamous thou . . . But while I breathe, my son
Is safe.
*Pol.* I call the Heav'ns to witness it,
He is Cresphontes. That belt is his own:
From this alone the error sprung. To you,
Messenians, I am known; I am not perjured . . .
*Ægis.* Do none among you recognize my face?
Of your illustrious monarch I am now

The only representative. Alas!
Is there not one that fought beneath his banners
In all this multitude? . . .
*Polyp.* He lies. Dispatch him . . .
*Me.* Me first . . . No, never . . .
*Ægis.* Ah! release my arm;
Give me a sword, a sword: by my exploits
I shall be quickly recognized.
*Me.* What words!
O true descendant of the great Alcides!
By his deportment, by his lofty speech,
Do not ye all now recognize him? Thou,
Dost thou not recognize him by thy fear,
O Polyphontes? Tremble now . . . Ah no!
'Tis I that tremble; to the earth I bend
My suppliant knees . . . Ah! do thou yield to pity!
This realm of mine, which thou wouldst share with me,
(At least it seem'd so,) keep exclusively;
Let it be always thine. The throne usurp'd,
My slaughter'd consort and my sons, all, all
I freely pardon thee; except this son,
Nothing remains to me in all the world;
I ask no other boon; spare him to me . . .
*Pol.* Reflect, that in thy ill-establish'd realm
Thou still hast many foes; that thou canst not,
Without a mighty risk, destroy her son.
If I deceive thee, take my life. Erewhile
Thou didst prepare thyself with so much pomp
To' avenge her for her son, him hoping dead;
He lives, and thou wouldst have him slain?
*Polyp.* —This youth
I might with justice, whosoe'er he be,
Sentence to death. But yet, still more and more,
Woman, before the eyes of all Messene,
I would convict thee of unworthy fraud.
He is no son of thine; for thou thyself
Sawest thine own son perish in the flames;
And all Messene often from thy mouth
Has heard the narrative: all here, with me,
Deem the assertion of this one old man,
A renegade, and doubtless bribed by thee,

In so important an affair, a proof
Ridiculous and vain: yet, while I wait
For other more conclusive arguments,
I will suppose it true.—Release him, guards.—
Uninjured I restore him to thy arms:
Hence to the marriage rites proposed by me
I hope to make thee yield . . .

*Ægis.* O infamy!
Shalt thou contaminate that father's bed
Of whom thou hast deprived me? . . . Rather now
Slay me upon the spot; 'twere a less evil . . .

*Me.* Ah! son, cease now to irritate him more.
Who knows what cruel projects he revolves? . . .
Ah! Polyphontes . . .

*Polyp.* Clear this vestibule
Of most of thy attendant troops, Adrastus;
Let the accustom'd guards alone remain.
And let the people for a while give way; . . .
They shall return . . .—Thou hearest what I say . . .—

## Scene IV.

POLYPHONTES, MEROPE, POLYDORE, ÆGISTHUS, GUARDS.

*Me.* What has he said to him? . . . O Heav'ns! . . . I tremble! . . .

*Polyp.* Nothing in all the world can save him, lady,
But thy consenting to be mine. If yet
There lurk some rebel subjects in Messene,
I in these walls am undisputed lord.
This fable of thy son shall be examined;
Should I destroy him, all my after ills
Could not to life restore him. A short space
I grant to thy reflections.—Ere the sun sets,
Here, in the presence of my household gods,
Thou shalt have given me thy hand in marriage;
Or here, before thy eyes, I shall myself
Have slain this youth.

*Me.* Ah! . . . hear me . . .

*Polyp.* Choose.—I leave thee.
Invent at will supposititious tales;

At least I have you all within my power.—
Guards, whosoe'er of these should try to fly
From this my palace, slay him instantly.

## SCENE V.

MEROPE, POLYDORE, ÆGISTHUS, *Guards at the bottom of the Scene.*

*Me.* Belovèd son! . . . my only son! . . . I scarce
Can think it true . . . And would I have destroy'd thee?
I? . . . Yet my anxious and bewilder'd heart
Felt a mysterious check . . . But what hard terms
Restore thee to me? . . . Wherefore thus complain?
All terms are easy that restore my son.

*Ægis.* Unhappy I! It had been better far
That I had perish'd in my infancy!
O mother, whither, whither do I drag thee! . . .

*Pol.* Hear me, O queen: a dire necessity
Constrains thee to submit. The cruel blow
Is but delay'd from the perfidious hope,
Which hath possess'd the tyrant to gain time,
And not increase the universal hate.
Provided that he can obtain thy hand,
He, for a time at least, will keep with thee
His hard conditions: but if thou refuse,
He will resort to sanguinary schemes,
As soonest put in force. 'Tis needful now,
Now, if it ever was, for thee to show
Thyself a mother, and nought else. 'Tis true,
To a dread sacrifice thou doom'st thyself;
But for thy son thou dost it . . .

*Me.* For his sake
What would I not perform? What doubt? . . .

*Ægis.* O mother! . . .

*Pol.* But, if it be perform'd, there then arise
A multitude of hopes. The tyrant feigns;
I hope we may anticipate his projects.
No sooner will our ancient friends have heard
That the last son of their Cresphontes lives,
Than they will subtle stratagems devise,
To rescue him from the perfidious tyrant.

If they behold him, what may we not hope!
Nothing is wanting to them, but a leader . . .
*Ægis.* And I will be that leader.
*Pol.* Yes, my son . . .
I dare to call thee by the' accustom'd name . . .
Their leader thou shalt be: within my heart
I feel a joyful presage; since the gods
Have heretofore vouchsafed to rescue thee
From the first fury of the frantic tyrant.
Meanwhile, dissimulation for a time
Is indispensable; thou, Merope,
Affect without reluctance to accept
The infamous conditions; 'tis thy duty:
Thou, youthful champion, struggle to assume
Conciliatory manners, such in short
As may root out, or may, at least in part,
Abate suspicion in the impious king;
Whence with his own arms thou mayst triumph o'er him:
Thou art constrain'd to this, if it concern thee
To break those heavy chains assumed for thee
By thy unhappy mother.
*Ægis.* Ah! . . . I swear
Thee to obey; at least while I am pow'rless.
Woe, if a sword is offer'd to my wrath!
Ah, then I'll only listen to my valor,
And to the prompting voice of my dead father.
*Pol.* Ah! hold thy peace.—Lady, do thou consent,
That, in thy name, without delay, I go
To the usurper; here consummate art,
And prompt decision, are alike required.
I shall know better how to feign than thou.
Grant thy consent that I may pledge thy hand:
Confide in me; I will, if I am able,
Obtain at least a temporary respite:
If in his wish he persevere, to-day
To celebrate the impious nuptial rites,
I place great hopes in the Messenians' aid.
Meanwhile do thou thy overweening courage,
And thou thy overweening hate, conceal.
I feel a mother's tenderness for thee;

But furthermore I have a father's sense,
And long experience: place in me reliance.
*Ægis.* O father! . . .
*Me.* Speedily, my faithful friend,
Depart: dispose of me as thou dost wish:
I, with my son, will hence retire a little.

### Scene VI.

MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS.

*Me.* In kissing, and embracing thee, at least
Let me indulge myself! . . .
*Ægis.* Alas, my mother,
At what a dreadful price thou doest it!

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## ACT V.

### Scene I.

POLYPHONTES, SOLDIERS.

*Polyp.* Merope yields at last.—Adrastus, go;
And spread the tidings of my nuptial rites;
And now, as far as the extent permits
Of this my royal threshold, give free ingress
To all the best Messenian citizens.
At the same time convey to Merope
Swift intimation, that I here await her,
Ready with all her wishes to comply.

### Scene II.

POLYPHONTES.

*Polyp.* Fortune, propitious hitherto to me,
Begins, then, now to wear a frowning aspect?
Can it be true that that Cresphontes' self,
Who has so long successfully evaded
My persevering and sagacious search,
Should now, when I the least expected it,
Appear before my eyes? And when to death

I justly sentence him, a strange concurrence
Of complex and inextricable chances,
E'en my own ill-advised and feign'd compassion,
At once condemn, betray, and rescue him?—
If I with art began, I needs must follow
With art; until the time for using force
Returns. Messene murmurs; hence must I
Affect more frankness and security
Tow'rds her in all my conduct. Merope
Only consents to these abhorrèd nuptials,
Because she is a mother; and perchance
From hence she afterwards expects my ruin . . .
But, I'll anticipate her stratagems.
As much as to herself, these rites to me
Are odious: but I thence expect to reap
Greater advantages, and earlier too.
Amid the marriage-bed's security,
A common table, and a common home,
A thousand, thousand means at ev'ry moment
May be contrived to perpetrate the deed
That now I cannot consummate, nor leave,
Without great risk, in after times, half done.—

## Scene III.

MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS, POLYDORE, POLYPHONTES, SOLDIERS, PEOPLE, PRIESTS, A VICTIM.

*Polyp.* O queen, approach; thus first I give to thee
Thy ancient epithet. At last thou yieldest:
O, may the day to us propitious be!
Thou see'st a festive pomp by me prepared,
To give due splendor to the solemn act,
As far as brevity of time permitted.
That ev'ry prejudice is laid aside,
Which parted us asunder, I now wish
The nobles, and the people, priests, and gods,
To witness; that to each one is restored
His ancient privileges; and that thus
A lofty compensation I award
For ev'ry outrage he has had to suffer.

*Me.* —But, those who stand around us, from thy mouth

Have heard perchance, that I'm a mother yet?
And at what price the life of this my son
To me thou sellest? . . .
*Polyp.* Erewhile, in thy name,
This old man spake to me another language.
What? Art thou changed already?—Yet, if thou
Desirest to communicate thy thoughts
To this august assembly, likewise I
Wish it to share in mine. I do not shrink
From making free confession of my schemes.
Then let Messene hear me.—Here I came
A victor: to this throne, with this my sword,
Where yet my ancestors invited me,
I clear'd myself a path. Your king, subdued,
Before the victor fell. I, p'rhaps too fierce
In that emergency, allow'd his sons
To lose their guiltless lives: atrocious fruit,
But one by custom sanction'd, of success.
The throne I gain'd, that throne I still retain:
But, what a leader, father, judge, and king,
To all of you I since have proved myself,
Ye all can testify. Within my palace
Merope lived in full security;
And further, like the consort of a king,
She lived a life of honor and respect.
Yet, well I knew, that to my detriment,
For impious vengeance, she preserved a son.
Behold this youth whom she proclaims her son;
Behold him: see with what design he comes.
*Me.* Behold him, yes: this is Alcides' blood,
Degraded thus . . . Ah traitor! who reduced him
To this disgraceful state?
*Pol.* O son, restrain
Thy just resentment . . .
*Polyp.* Yes, 'tis surely I
Who hither drag him in the character
Of a perfidious murd'rer; I who soil'd
His impious hands with inoffensive blood.
Your lofty champion, your new hero, see!
Most incontestably he proved himself
The worthy offspring of Alcides, he

Who hither came clandestinely to slay me?
And with another cruel homicide
Practised meanwhile his inexpert right hand
In bloody violence: and lurk'd disguised,
In gen'rous ambush, waiting for the hour,
When he might find a passage to my breast.
Thus, in what character he comes, ye learn;
And fraud, or artifice, or accident,
Reveals him thus to you. I well might now
Inflict on him the punishment he merits:
But my desire for peace is too sincere:
From me has Merope implored his life;
I yield it to her; solely on condition
That she refuse me not her hand in marriage,
And thus at length all broils betwixt us cease.
Nor this suffices: if this be her offspring,
Since other sons I have not, him I choose
As my successor.—What more could I do?—
Ought I indeed to do so much as this?—
And ye, Messenians, heretofore accustom'd
To the dominion of a hoary warrior,
Would ye swear homage to a beardless youth,
Nurtured obscurely, to himself unknown;
Who hitherto no presage of himself,
Or one that is discouraging, hath given;
And ignorant of ev'ry public art? . . .

*Ægis.* Ignorant? Yes, 'tis true, of arts like thine;
I am not, no, of those Alcides practised:
And shall give proofs of this . . .

*Pol.* Ah! hold thy peace:
Why thus exasperate him? Thou dost see;
Too many are his satellites: each man,
From terror, here is mute.

*Polyp.* —No, ye are mute,
Messenians, by profound amazement stricken
At my incautious lenity. My words,
I clearly see, have thoroughly convinced you:
And, further, ye esteem'd my act unwise,
Now that to these I wholly trust myself;
And since their hearts already have been made
To me so manifest. 'Tis true; but yet

I wish, whate'er the cost, to make to them
A memorable and sublime atonement
For my past victory.—Now, Merope,
On thy decision I depend: erewhile
I gain'd thy free assent; wouldst now retract it?
*Me.* —This universal petrifying silence
But too distinctly doth announce my fate.—
My son, yes, let my death ensure his life:
This duty orders.—O thou unavenged,
And sorrowing shade of my adored Cresphontes,
Pardon the' involuntary breach of faith!
By thee was I a mother; for thy son
To these funereal marriage-rites I come.
O son, thou call'st me to a bitter trial . . .
But, I am recompensed abundantly,
If thou remain'st alive . . . Can it be true,
That I am thus by violence constrain'd? . . .
O ye, in former times, of this youth's father
The faithful subjects, can ye witness us
Reduced to such extremity? . . .
*Polyp.* Make haste . . .
*Me.* Ah! be not thou incensed: a few words more,
And I shall cease to speak.—Hear thou, O son,
My latest admonitions. Do thou bend
That brow, where ineffectual pride sits throned,
To the despotic victor: I, alas!
Can teach thee naught, excepting how to serve.
Now, by anticipating his desires,
And now by executing them in silence;
By the assumption of humility,
By never mentioning thy father's name;
'Tis only by these arts thou mayst perchance
Divert his thoughts from blood. Ere long wilt thou
See me for ever to the tomb consign'd:
Do thou meanwhile, though difficult to keep,
Store up within thy mind these my last words.
*Ægis.* O wretched mother! . . . O excessive grief! . . .
But, can I be persuaded to drag on
A life like this, bought at so vast a price?
To pine in servitude is not to live,
To natures such as mine. Do thou live on,

Belovèd mother; and permit that I
Die, at least worthy my exalted father.
*Polyp.* 'Tis past all suff'rance, this delay of thine,
O Merope. The kingdom, perfect peace,
Thy son, these I restore to thee at once.
Whence are these tears? Art hoping to excite
My subjects to rebellion? I confide
In their fidelity: e'en if I would,
Each of them now sees clearly that, for thee,
I could do nothing more.—Resolve; on high
O'er the bull's neck the sacred axe impends.
Behold my right hand; thine, O Merope,
Is now by me expected as the signal
To immolate the victim to the gods.
*Me.* . . . What shall I do? . . . Unhappy I! . . . O day! . . .
O dreadful moment! . . . Here's my right hand then . . .
But, O! all-bleeding, menacing, and fierce,
Cresphontes interposes! . . . Where am I? . . .
Ah! . . . whither shall I fly? . . . Messenians, pity . . .
*Ægis.* O rage! and shall I suffer this? . . .
*Pol.* Be silent
On thee already does the tyrant dart
His rabid eyes . . .
*Polyp.* No more. Yet once again,
O lady, do I offer it to thee:
Behold my right hand.
*Me.* O distraction! . . . Mine . . .
*Ægis.* Die thou.[1] This is the right hand due to thee.
*Pol.* Audacious youth!
*Me.* What do I see?
*Ægis.* Die thou.[2]
*Polyp.* O treason! Guards . . . I die . . .
*Soldiers.* He is a traitor;
Slay him.
*People.* No! rescue him; he is our king.[3]
*Me.* He is my son, I swear to you; your king . . .
*Ægis.* Far other proofs will I give you of this:

[1] Having seized the axe from the hand of the priest, he darts towards Polyphontes, and levels him to the earth with a blow.
[2] He repeats the blow.
[3] The people attack the soldiers.

And this my single axe shall soon disperse
Lances and swords.[1]
*Me.* Messenians, ah! defend him . . .
*Pol.* I breathe again . . . Behold the tyrant's troops
Already are dispersed . . .
*Me.* O son, return! . . .
Ah, wretched I! . . .
*Pol.* Through blood will I pursue him:
Had I my youthful arm! But, for his sake,
I will lay down my life.—Ah! hear me, son:
Return: rush not so rashly forward; ah!
Let me alone now die in thy defence . . .
*Ægis.* At length we've conquer'd them. Rejoice, O mother;
Thou see'st the mercenary soldiers fly,
Fly to a man: Adrastus, by my hands,
Lies lifeless; and the citizens in crowds
Flock more and more . . .
*Me.* He is my son, Messenians!
He is Cresphontes: do ye know him not
Both by his face, his voice, his looks, his deeds
Of mighty daring, and my love immense? . . .
*Pol.* And by my oath which now confirms her words?
O ye Messenians, by my hoary locks,
By my integrity well known to you,
By the remembrance of that great Cresphontes,
Rather to us a father than a king;
Yield, I conjure you, an implicit faith
To my asseveration. I myself
Rescued him from Messene; brought him up . . .
*Ægis.* Messenians, there, stretch'd lifeless on the earth,
(Do ye behold him?) Polyphontes lies:
I slew him; I alone avenged to-day
My father, and my brothers, and my mother,
Myself, and you: if hence I guilty seem
To you, I yield myself to you alone.—
Behold; the axe, which for such deeds sufficed,
I cast it on the earth: behold me now
Wholly defenceless, wholly in your power:

[1] He darts among the combatants.

If I have shed the blood of these unjustly,
Be mine in retribution shed by you.
*People.* O gen'rous, noble youth! In ev'ry thing
His father he resembles.
*Me.* And in him
Cresphontes lives again . . .
*People.* O joyful hope!
He is our rightful king . . .
*Pol.* And worthy king.
Let me first, humbly prostrate at his feet,
Offer to him my reverential homage!
And, citizens, do ye all kneel with me.
*People.* To thee we all swear everlasting faith:
Thou wilt be just as thou art truly brave:
That lofty aspect cannot be deceitful.
*Ægis.* I swear to be so. But, if I be not,
May I, as this usurper, lifeless fall.
*Pol.* Ah! why do I not breathe my last this day!
Ne'er should I die more happy.
*Me.* O my son,
Come to my breast . . . But ah! . . . from . . . too much . . . joy . . .
I feel myself o'erwhelm'd . . .
*Ægis.* O mother! . . . She
Sinks lifeless from immoderate emotion.
To some more still apartment let us lead her—
Hither, Messenians, I ere long return,
To tell to you the story of my life.—
Thou, my good father, follow me: do thou
Still deem me less thy monarch, than thy son.

XI.

# MARY STUART.

## THE ARGUMENT.

THE unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots, who was born in 1542, married in the first instance, in 1558, the French Dauphin, who became King of France in 1559. He died the next year, and she married again in 1565 her cousin Henry Stuart, Earl of Darnley, called Henry in this play. The well-known murder of Rizzio, her secretary, took place in her presence in 1566, with the connivance of Darnley. Besides Mary and Darnley, the characters in the play are the Earl of Bothwell (whom she married in 1567, after the assassination of Darnley and the blowing-up of his house, which forms the catastrophe of the tragedy); Ormond, the ambassador of Queen Elizabeth to Mary; and the subsequently famous Earl of Murray, a leader of the Reformed Church of Scotland, a natural son of James V., and the Regent of the kingdom during the minority of Mary's son, James VI. of Scotland and I. of England.

In the first scene, Murray reproaches Mary with her estrangement from her husband, which has induced him to leave the Court. Mary alleges his share in the murder of Rizzio as the chief reason. Ormond enters when Mary is alone as ambassador from Elizabeth, and urges her to adopt a milder rule towards those of her subjects, the large majority, who have cast off allegiance to Rome, and also to

be reconciled to Henry. She resents the interference of Elizabeth, and confers with her favourite Bothwell as to the course to be pursued.

Henry and Murray are next seen together, and the latter urges the king to renounce the errors of the Roman faith, of which he had become convinced, and to induce Mary to cease her persecution of the Protestants. Henry laments his marriage, but consents to an interview with the queen. He uses proud language towards her, and repels her advances towards reconciliation, unless he is restored to his full position as king and entrusted with the care of their infant son. Bothwell then advises her that Henry should not be allowed access to the palace where the prince is living, fearing that there may be some plot to carry him off. He also suggests that Mary and Henry should reside together in the Castle of Edinburgh, and see what influence her love will have over his conduct.

Henry and Ormond now meet. Ormond assures the king of the sympathy of Elizabeth and himself, and his wish to serve him. When he talks of going into voluntary exile, Ormond suggests his retiring to England, and then artfully propounds a scheme for carrying off his son and having him educated by Elizabeth, and promises that in return the latter will have him made sovereign-regent during the minority of James. Bothwell next sees Henry and warns him from Mary to beware of Ormond's intrigues, as the plot he has formed has been discovered by her. Ormond and Henry once more meet. When informed by the king that the plot is known, Ormond professes regret for what he has done, and asserts that it was instigated by Mary herself.

The King and Queen bitterly reproach each other at the beginning of the fourth Act. Mary denies all knowledge of the supposed plot, and Henry says that he will only be satisfied by the death of Bothwell and the instant dismissal of Ormond. She refuses, and he (speaking for the

last time in the play) tells her that he will sleep, as desired by her, in the Castle, but for that one night only, and then leave Edinburgh. Bothwell next tells Mary that Henry and Ormond are really plotting to carry off her son to England, there to be brought up as a Protestant, and that Henry's reward is to be the throne of Scotland. She replies that Henry had just been accusing her of being the author of this very plot, and of having made Ormond her tool. Ormond is introduced, and throws the whole blame on Henry as its sole instigator. In consequence of these statements, which irritate Mary in the highest degree against Henry, she gives Bothwell permission to surround with troops the Castle where the king has gone to sleep, on the plea of preventing him from carrying out his schemes against her son.

The fifth Act opens with the hasty entrance of Murray into Mary's presence, and his denunciation of her conduct in letting the Castle be thus surrounded by Bothwell's satellites. He presently bursts into a fit of inspiration, and in glowing language depicts first the approaching murder of Henry, and then in prophetic strain the subsequent execution of Mary herself at the hands of Elizabeth and the ultimate ruin and extinction of the race of Stuarts. Mary, wild with terror, implores him to hasten to save Henry. Bothwell comes and tells her that all approach to the Castle is interdicted, and that not even Murray can obtain an entrance. Whilst he is speaking a violent explosion is heard. Murray enters, and announces that the house in which the king was sleeping has been blown up, and that he had perished in the ruins. Mary vows vengeance on the author of the deed, and the curtain falls.

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This tragedy (which departs considerably from historical accuracy) was originally written by Alfieri in 1778 at the

suggestion of his future wife, the Countess of Albany. It is a curious fact that all the manuscript versions of the play contain, at the end of the prophetic vision of Murray in the first scene of Act V., ten lines which are omitted from all the printed copies, in which the poet draws a vivid and far from complimentary portrait of the Countess's husband, the Young Pretender, the last of the Stuart race, who was still alive. They are as follows:—

". . . O despicable race,
Yes, thou wilt one day see thy end. O thou
Last offshoot of it, will the sword destroy thee?
No: not a hand is vile enough to deign
To soil itself with blood like thine: thy life
Will pass in one long slothful sleep: while he
Who'll hold thy throne will not thy foeman be:
Thy battle-field will be the table: thou
In drunken revels wilt the memory drown
Of thy unmerited, untasted reign."

The author wrote on the margin of one of the manuscripts: "To be omitted, as I had the misfortune of knowing this person, and do not wish to incur the stigma of malignity. But art required that these verses should remain." The Countess wrote a few criticisms on the play in her own hand and in bad Italian, but they are stated to be of no importance. Alfieri himself criticizes this play somewhat severely, though he is obviously proud of Murray's prophetic outburst above spoken of, and sums up by saying that he considers it "weak and cold, and therefore the worst of all that the author had yet written or was going to write, and the only one that he perhaps wished not to have written." Sismondi dismisses it in four lines, with no opinion as to its merits.

It may be added that Schiller's well-known play of the same name refers to a subsequent period of Mary's life, when she was Elizabeth's prisoner at Fotheringay Castle.

## DEDICATION

TO

# THE COUNTESS OF ALBANY.

[This Dedication does not appear in any of the editions of Alfieri's works published by himself, and was only found attached to one of his earlier manuscripts of this play. It remained unedited till lately. It was obviously written after the death of the Countess's husband early in 1788.]

As every work of mine is yours, you must not be left for a moment in doubt that I wish to anticipate the slightest wish of yours. I have often heard that unhappy woman, Mary Stuart, pitied by you; it has given me pleasure to exculpate her in this tragedy, which I dedicate expressly to you, as much as possible from the murder of her husband generally laid to her charge. I confess that I would not have entered on such a task of my own spontaneous genius: partly because I take greater delight in antique themes, as richer in virtues or grander in crimes; and partly because I foresaw that I could not deal with the subject without either inclining to adulation, or in some manner offending the memory of a race to which, during a long period of unhappiness, you remained attached by sacred ties. However, you shall hear me speak with my usual liberty, which, next to you, I deem the dearest thing in the world; and, whilst I develop the truth, I will show you that, for your own sake, and not because I was near you, I consecrated to you the better portion of my life; the whole of the genius that was in me; and more obsequious affection than was ever found in any other heart.

# MARY STUART.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|---|---|
| MARY. | ORMOND. |
| HENRY | MURRAY. |
| BOTHWELL. | |

SCENE.—*The Palace in Edinburgh.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

MARY, MURRAY.

*Mur.* If thou dar'st hear the truth, O queen, I dare
To thee express it, since thy faithful people
Of this esteem me capable; and since
Around the throne there are none who desire,
Or dare to speak it. In my breast I bear
A flame, not fed by human sympathies,
Which, caught from Him, aspires to God alone.
*Ma.* Your license yields no small encouragement
(Whether by me indulged, or snatch'd by you)
To license of the people. Your base schemes,
Beneath the sacred shelter of the church,
Securely flourish: ye are now detected.
But, that it may be manifest that I
Hear truth as fearlessly as thou canst speak it,
I listen to thee; speak.
*Mur.* It grieveth me
That I have not found favor in thy sight;

But p'rhaps I now may serve thee; to do this
Will be more meritorious than to please thee.
These tears of mine are not dissembled tears;
Nor are they prompted by fallacious fear:
These tears are those of all; this voice of mine
Is all thy people's voice.—Now answer me;
I, in all Scotland's name, the question ask;
Tell me: art thou a widow or a wife?
Is he, whom thou thyself hast, by thy side,
Placed on the throne, who has the name of king,
Is he thy spouse? or enemy, or slave?

*Ma.* Henry a slave, or enemy, to me?
How speakest thou? My lover and my spouse
My heart accounts him always; but of his,
Who can affirm the same?

*Mur.* He, far from thee,
Can ill interpret thy true sentiments;
Thou, his still worse.

*Ma.* Who keeps him far from me?
'Tis self-imposed, this exile from the court.
How many times have I invited him
Here to return? Yet erewhile, when I was
Reduced by sickness to the brink of death,
Did he not only never visit me,
But never once sought tidings of my welfare?
This was the best reward of my affection;
I pass o'er others; and I pass it o'er,
That from my vassal him I made your king,
And for a long time mine; that for his sake
To the most pow'rful kings of Christendom
My right hand I refused.—But I would fain
Confer, and not remember, benefits;
P'erchance e'en now the many unjust insults
By Henry shown to me, I might forget,
If I beheld in him, on their account,
Even the flattery of feign'd remorse.

*Mur.* Thy cold reception banish'd him from thee,
The whispers of the court, the daring looks
Of servile satellites, perfidious smiles,
Nods, and inquisitorial insolence,
And all the thousand courtiers' arts so fitted

To drive away a man who's call'd a king,
Yet at the same time humble and enduring.
*Ma.* And when in this my court all smiled upon him,
Was his deportment different? The torch
Of Hymen still for us was burning here,
When I perceived already, that his heart
Was, of the throne, and not of me, enamor'd.
How oft, alas! my lukewarm royal bed
I bathed with tears! How oft to Heav'n complain'd
Of that imposing rank, by which I lost
That best of human blessings, that sole good:
Loving, and being loved! Yet, though exempt
From false and overweening self-esteem,
I saw myself the equal of all others,
In all the flow'r of youth and beauty too;
I felt myself with genuine love inflamed,
That highest earthly prize. What gain'd I from it?
I in return the worst of insults bore.
Prodigal of my honor, as of his,
He murder'd Rizzio with an impious hand;
Eternal blot to both . . .
*Mur.* And what? Is that
E'en yet by thee remember'd? A vile stranger,
Raised to supreme command, at once displeased
Thy consort, and thy people . . .
*Ma.* But should he
Of that vile stranger the assassin be?
How could he let or make the world believe,
That I burn'd tow'rds him with flagitious love?
Just God, Thou know'st it well!—To me was Rizzio
A faithful counsellor, profoundly skill'd
In all the various characters of men,
A minister expert: and by his means
I steered securely 'mid conflicting parties:
Vain, by his means, were the perfidious snares,
So oft repeated, of Elizabeth,
My bitter, indefatigable foe:
And last, by his means, Henry, with my hand,
My sceptre gain'd. Nor did that proud one scorn
The same vile stranger, while he saw in him
The instrument by which he was to gain

The distant crown. He gain'd it: and from him
What recompense did Rizzio thence receive?
Amidst the quiet shades of night, beneath
My royal roof, 'mid hospitable rites,
'Midst helpless women, and before my eyes,
Bearing within my womb the first dear pledge
Of wedded love, he thither comes by stealth
For trait'rous purposes: and dares defile,
With blood, as guiltless as it was ignoble,
My table, my apartment, and my dress,
Nay e'en my face, and what is more, my fame.
*Mur.* Rizzio was raised unduly. To a king,
Can any circumstance be more offensive,
Than to derive his honors from a subject?
He who once gave, might take away the throne;
And he who thus might take it, is by kings
Hated and slain. But yet, to thy revenge
Henry surrender'd his accomplices:
With blood, methinks, for blood thou mad'st atonement.—
I come not here to speak in Henry's praise:
He is inferior to the throne; who knows
Not this? But I come hither to remind thee,
That he's thy consort; that from him there springs
Thy sceptre's only heir. On you reverts
A heavy scandal from your private feuds;
And we are menaced with impending danger.
'Tis said, that he returns to-day: already
The same thing he has done; but ev'ry time
More gloomy has retired, and afterwards
A deeper sadness hover'd o'er thy palace.
Let him not come in vain to-day, I pray thee:
Enough, too many jarring elements
This realm contains within itself. I see
Religion, by a thousand diff'rent sects
Trodden to earth, ill-used, and not profess'd.
The consummation of our woes would be
Royal dissensions; ah, avert them, queen!
Without the poison of a flatt'ring tongue,
From a true heart, thus daringly I speak.
*Ma.* I trust to thy professions: but enough.
Now the first audience ought I soon to give

To the ambassador from England. Go,
Leave me: and know, and say it, if thou wilt,
To all my people, that, of my good fame,
I live not so regardless, as to need
That others now remind me of my duty.
That which by love of truth thou art compell'd
To say to me, do thou repeat to Henry,
To whom 'twere more adapted. If he can,
Let him, without resentment, or alarm,
This thy free language hear, to which, in proof
Of an offenceless conscience, I have listen'd.

## Scene II.

MARY.

*Ma.* Ye lying demagogues of the blind vulgar,
Ye instigators of an impious sect,
Must I be doom'd eternally to hear
Your arrogant harangues?—Of all the griefs
That plant the throne, on which I sit, with thorns,
These are the hardest to endure: yet I
Am forced to bear them, till my tarnish'd throne
Through me resumes its pristine lofty splendor.

## Scene III.

MARY, ORMOND.

*Or.* O queen, to thee, the messenger of peace,
And the confirmer of eternal friendship,
Elizabeth hath sent me; in her name,
In ev'ry enterprise, I offer thee
Her powerful assistance.
*Ma.* I already
Know by experience what her friendship is;
Hence mayest thou infer the depth of mine.
*Or.* Hence I derive the confidence, and courage,
To intercede with thee . . .
*Ma.* For what?
*Or.* Thou knowest
That marriage-rites have not yet shackled her;
That of her throne thy son is hitherto
The sole successor: may it please thee, then,

For the dear sake of this beloved child,
The hope of both these realms, to us as precious
As he is to thyself; to banish from thee
All rancor that thy heart may entertain
Against his father. Thou wert firmly bent
On making him thy spouse; and can it now
Be true, that a precipitate divorce
Should sever him from thee? . . .

*Ma.* And who has spread
Such tales of me? False be they, or malignant,
Yet if the threshold of Elizabeth
Haply they reach, must they find faith in her?
Not e'en a single thought of a divorce
I ever entertain'd; yet, were it so,
What meanest thou? Could that to her give umbrage,
Whom to my nuptials formerly I found
So utterly averse?

*Or.* Elizabeth,
Though never envious of thy happiness,
Was jealous of thy honor. She applied
Counsel both frank and friendly, to thy free
And royal judgment. She dissuaded thee
From nuptials maybe somewhat less illustrious
Than might befit an independent princess;
But nothing more. Persuaded afterwards
Of thy fix'd resolution, she was silent;
Nor do I think that blame to her attaches,
If thou art not in perfect happiness.

*Ma.* 'Tis true: she kept not in hard fetters bound
Henry, whom I had chosen for my consort;
So that, a fugitive from prison, he
Came to my royal bed; and his right hand,
Yet livid from the pressure of her chains,
To my right hand he join'd: nor does she now,
In a well-guarded tow'r, within her realm,
Retain by force the mother of my spouse.
'Tis well becoming her, indeed, to feel,
To-day, compassion for this self-same Henry.—
Thou shouldst from this most exquisite distress
Relieve her, by assuring her, that Henry
Lives, at his pleasure, in full liberty,
Remote from court, or else within its precincts;

That from my heart I have not banish'd him;
And that I never knew, nor know I now,
How to investigate the cares of others.
*Or.* Nor does Elizabeth, within thy palace,
Presume to penetrate, more than is fitting,
With curious indiscretion. Royal secrets,
Though known to all, to ev'ry king are sacred.
I am commanded to suggest to thee
Respectfully, that to a double realm,
One heir alone affords a hope too scanty;
And that the life of but a single child
Uncertain is, and causes endless fears . . .
*Ma.* This most magnanimous solicitude
Of her great heart hath in my heart inspired
Reciprocal solicitude. I still
Cherish the hope to be again a mother;
And still to make her happy, who partakes
In all my joys, with a new num'rous offspring.
But, if she is as prodigal of aid
As of advice to me, I hope ere long
To see in perfect peace, not only this
My palace, but my realm.
*Or.* To gain such peace,
I in her name now venture to propose
As the best means . . .
*Ma.* They are?
*Or.* No doubtful means.
She wishes thee somewhat more mild to those
Who not thy yoke, but that of Rome, have spurn'd.
E'en as thy other subjects, these are faithful,
And far surpassing them in strength and numbers;
They feel as men, and are thy loyal sons;
To whom their diff'rent creed alone procures
From thee such disproportionate oppression.

## Scene IV.

MARY, ORMOND, BOTHWELL.

*Ma.* Ah, come; O Bothwell, enter these apartments;
Hear what incredible advice, to me,
The representative of England's queen

Brings, in his mistress' name. She wishes me
More mild towards the heretics; she wishes
Myself and Henry indivisible;
And trembles lest divorce should sever us.
*Both.* Now who could give her of thy government
Such false impressions? What religious sect
Hast thou e'er persecuted? Who to-day
Dares even to pronounce the word divorce?
This day, when Henry is to thee returning . . .
*Or.* To-day, say'st thou?
*Ma.* Yes. Now thou see'st; I first
Anticipate Elizabeth's desires.
*Or.* Deceitful fame exempts not even kings:
Laden with false intelligence it came
E'en to my mistress; as there came to thee
A character of her not less fallacious,
Which painted her thy foe. I entertain
(Perhaps 'tis self-flattery) the lofty hope
Of being of your genuine sentiments
The not unwelcome true interpreter,
While, in compliance with the will of each,
A station in thy presence I maintain
No less felicitous than dignified.
*Ma.* Oft are the deeds of those whose lofty rank
Exposes them to view, perversely judged:
Mine, hitherto both innocent and open,
Shrink from no witnesses. Do thou explain them
Unto Elizabeth: meanwhile, as well
For thy own sake, as hers who sent thee hither,
Thou wilt be always honor'd in my court.

## Scene V.

MARY, BOTHWELL.

*Ma.* Hard to endure! Well do I know her hate
And rancor; yet am I constrain'd to welcome
And honor this her spy. With new devices
She now assails me; recommends the good,
That I may do it not. She asks of me
To grant a toleration to the sects;
Then, that I persecute them, in her heart

She wishes. She dissuades me from divorce;
Ah! then she hopes to hasten it. I know
That, much as ever sceptred mortal err'd,
She wills that I should err. With her own arts
I shall know how to parry her attacks.
I will, by granting her dissembled wishes,
More and more torture her malignant heart.

*Both.* Thou know'st I said this to thee, when thou deignedst
Thy thoughts to me to open. Henry should not
Now be remote from thee, for various reasons.
Whether his menaces to quit the realm
Be true or feign'd, thou ought'st to take from him
The means of doing it, by watching o'er him.

*Ma.* The shame of such a flight would fall on me.
His throne, his son, his country, and his consort
Quitting, and begging a precarious shelter;
Who that beheld him thus would deem me guiltless?
I will not be a fable to the world;
Rather will I embrace the worst misfortunes.

*Both.* Thou hast well chosen. O! were this the day
That full domestic peace return'd once more!
Since he to thy solicitations yields,
To which he hitherto was deaf, at length
Thou mayest hope.

*Ma.* Yes, I would fain believe it.
At length, a true, though late remorse, for all
His past ingratitude, conducts him here.
He still will find me to himself unchanged:
And, if I see him penitent, disposed
To pardon all the past.

*Both.* Ah, were he so!
Thou know'st full well how much I wish thee happy.

*Ma.* The recollection of my debt to thee,
Will never quit my mind. Thou hast avenged
The throne insulted by the foes of Rizzio,
By their just punishment. I found in thee
A sure defender in the camp, against
The open rebels; 'gainst the hidden ones,
More despicable far, to me wert thou
A faithful counsellor within my court.

Thou hast at once contrived to disconcert
Henry's imprudent plots, and recollect
That that same Henry was my husband also.
*Both.* Fatal address! Ah! may there no more be
Occasion for exerting it!
*Ma.* Ah! yes,
If Henry hear me, and believe my love,
(Which he alone believes not,) I may yet
Hope for all happiness. The throne to me
Is far less precious than my husband's heart.
But let us hear him; I have hopes e'en yet:
Heav'n may do much; and fate may be propitious...
But where I would of counsel or address
Avail myself, thou more than other men
My projects canst promote.
*Both.* My arm, my blood,
My substance, and my judgment, (if indeed
I be so gifted,) all, O queen, are thine.

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## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

HENRY, MURRAY.

*Hen.* Yes, I repeat it to thee; I come hither
To wreak full vengeance on my enemies,
Or bid farewell for ever to these walls.
*Mur.* Thou doest well. But thou shouldst not, O king,
Flatter thyself with prosperous event
To thy designs, while thou dost steel thy heart
Against its inward conflicts of remorse,
Against the frequently-repeated signs
Of an offended God. Thou long hast been
Fully convinced of the' errors of the faith
That thou professest: the sad vestiges,
At ev'ry step, by thousands and by thousands,
Of thy perverse and persecuting sect,
Crowd on thy path: yet dar'st thou not shake off
The guilty servitude of coward Rome;

Whence in the sight of all the world thou art
Despised, and impious in the sight of God.
This is the first, too plainly, and, alas!
This the sole cause of thy adversity.
*Hen.* More than convinced am I, that I ought not
E'er to have sought this fatal royal marriage:
Not that the rank to which it raises me
O'erwhelms my faculties; this very sceptre
Was to my ancestors no unknown weight:
But I regret, that I reflected not
What a capricious and unstable thing
The heart of woman is; and what a weight
A benefit imposes, when received
From one that is not skill'd to give it wisely.
*Mur.* My soul is not cast in a vulgar mould:
Hear me, then, Henry. Favor in the court
I do not seek: the love of peace inspires me.
'Tis in thy pow'r for all thy past mistakes
To make a full atonement, and to win
To paths of virtue back thy erring consort;
To make thy people blest; the chosen sons,
Not of the dreadful God of wrath and blood,
(Whom Rome depicts and represents so truly,)
But the true sons of the all-pitying God,
Who are iniquitously trodden down,
These mayst thou rescue; and mayst dissipate
The mists impure, which from the Tiber's stream,
The source corrupt of tyranny and fraud,
With pestilential influence arise.
*Hen.* And what? wilt thou that I misspend my time
In disputations vain about vain rites,
When I am loudly call'd on to defend
My honor and my rank? . . .
*Mur.* Dar'st thou describe
These things as vain? They many a thousand times
Have ta'en away and given realms and lives.
If thy heart feels a just contempt for Rome,
Why not confess it? Raise thy standard high;
Thou'lt be sustain'd by all who Rome detest.
*Hen.* I do not feed myself with civil bloodshed:
I'll seek elsewhere that peace I have not here . . .

*Mur.* What are thy hopes? Will it bring peace to thee
To see from distant climes thy native country
Burn with intestine broils? For to fly hence
Is but assuredly to give the signal
For civil war. I prompt thee not to arms;
I am not, no, the minister of blood.
To frustrate more atrocious grievances,
And from oppression liberate thy friends,
Ere to rebellion they be forced, to this,
Nought else, do I exhort thee. Violence
Thou shouldst not use; but hinder that of others.
Mary, who with her foreign milk imbibed,
As at a fountain inexhaustible,
Foreign delusions; Mary, who unites,
For Scotland's ruin, in her youthful breast
The persecuting principles of Rome
With the soft manners of luxurious France;
I do not bid thee ever to forget
That the same Mary is thy spouse and mistress:
Leave her at her own will to think and act;
We have not learn'd her persecuting tenets:
We wish alone for liberty and peace:
May they be gain'd through thee! Thou mayst at once
Procure thy peace and ours. A storm obscure
I see, which threatens us, and also may
Fall on thy head, if thou refuse to hear me.
The vilest miscreants in these precincts lurk,
And lurk in numbers, who would ruin thee,
And who at once calumniate and detest thee.
In vain thou wouldst among them hope to find
Sincerity and honor: we are they,
If yet indeed there be true Scots; of Rome,
Of guilty, foreign, and effeminate fashions
Invet'rate foes, and equally the foes
Of foreign and augmenting tyranny.
Wouldst be the mod'rate king of worthy men?
'Tis yet within thy pow'r: wouldst rather be
The tyrant of the guilty? There are they
Who wish this more than thou. There are who have
Already made a sceptre of the sword:
The knot is too perplex'd; it must be cut,

It cannot be unloosed. Why thus I speak
Heav'n knows; and if I wish for aught but peace.—
Act, then, according to thy judgment: I
Already have resign'd the hope that truth
Should by a king be e'er from me believed.

## SCENE II.

HENRY.

*Hen.* Murray may be sincere; but my hard fate
Hath so o'erruled me, that the choice of errors
Alone remains for me.—Already all
Convinces me that I return in vain:
Each tongue is dumb: and the reluctant queen
Delays to welcome me; and all the rest . . .
O rage! . . . But, she approaches: be she heard;
I shall be better able to resolve
After this conference.

## SCENE III.

HENRY, MARY.

*Ma.* Thou'rt welcome here,
Thou, whom as the inseparable partner
Of all my griefs and joys I chose. At last
Thou yieldest, and dost listen to my prayers:
At length within thy palace thou returnest;
That it is always thine, thou knowest well,
Although in voluntary banishment
From thence it pleases thee to live so far.
*Hen.* Queen . . .
*Ma.* Why thus call me? Why not call me consort?
*Hen.* Say, are our destinies the same?
*Ma.* Ah! no;
Thou mak'st me spend my tedious days in tears . . .
*Hen.* My tears thou seeest not . . .
*Ma.* I have beheld thee
Bedew, 'tis true, thy cheek with tears of rage,
But not of love.
*Hen.* Whatever be the cause,
I wept; and still I weep.

*Ma.* And who can cure
This ceaseless grief, who wipe my tearful eyes,
Who to my soul restore pure genuine joy,
Who, if not thou?
*Hen.* Which of us has the power,
And having that, the will, will soon be seen.
Meanwhile, I tell thee that to-day I do not
Come to repeated insults...
*Ma.* Why wilt thou,
O Heav'ns! thus irritate before thou hear'st me?
If thou deem it an insult to behold
Other men's judgments not submit to thine,
Here oft, I grant, but always spite of me,
Wert thou insulted. Their immunities
Monarchs possess, and monarchies their laws,
And their infringement is to all injurious:
Nor dared I hinder thee from breaking them,
Than as I should myself have been restrain'd
If an unwise desire had prompted me
To arbitrary pow'r. But, if of me,
If of my heart thou speakest, of my love
For thee, and of my private fondnesses,
Belovèd consort, what part of myself
Did I not give thee unreservedly?
My lord and my support, say, wert not thou
My first, my last, my sole solicitude?—
And thou wilt evermore be this, if thou
Wilt only lay aside thy unjust wrath,
And, far as usage of the law permits,
Lord of the realm e'en now indeed wilt be,
And, without any limitation, mine.
*Hen.* The ostentation I esteem an insult,
The haughty manners tow'rds myself adopted
By the audacious ministers, or friends,
Or slaves, or counsellors, or parasites;
For I know not how I should designate
Those that around thee stand. And I esteem
That which I meet with ev'ry day an insult;
To be still flatter'd by the name of king,
Whilst I'm not only of the pow'r bereft,
But even of the superficial pomp

That waits on royalty; to see myself
Rather in servitude than liberty;
My motions and my words, my deeds and thoughts,
Investigated all, and all betray'd;
Bereft of ev'ry solace of a father;
Not only not to be allow'd to watch
The education of my only son,
But from his presence to be interdicted;
And no one else.—What should I further add?
What boots it to enumerate in turns
My many wrongs? Thou know'st how comfortless,
How much neglected, and how much oppress'd,
Degraded, and perchance how much betray'd,
Is he whom thou unluckily hast chosen
The partner of thy throne; yet, having chosen,
Whom self-respect forbids thee to despise.

*Ma.* Perchance I also might reply to thee,
That thy incautious actions have alone
So far reduced thee; and I might suggest,
With what unworthy recompense at first
Thou didst return my love; how, more intent
To subjugate, than, with benignant arts,
To gain the minds of Scotland's haughty chiefs,
Impatient of restraint, thou lost them quite;
And too much trusting in thy faithless friends,
At first thou drewest from their intercourse
Pernicious counsels, treason afterwards,
And detriment, and forfeiture of love.
I might speak further . . . But can I proceed? . . .
Ah, no! . . . That is a superficial love
Which watches, blames, or does presume to judge
The weaknesses of the beloved object.—
To an oblivion everlasting now
Be these consign'd. If it can soothe thy heart
That I should seem in fault, so let it be:
Provided that we both escape the evil!
Do thou and all thy friends calm thoughts resume.
Open once more thy breast to confidence;
Nor let fantastic thoughts of novelty
Thy judgment captivate. Within thy palace
Reigning, learn thou the arts of government.

I do not dare propose myself to thee
As one well skill'd in such a complex art;
For inexpert, I oftentimes have err'd:
My immature capacity, my sex,
And p'rhaps a natural defect of judgment,
In many errors have perchance involved me.
I only know, as far as in me lies,
To choose sagacious and just counsellors:
Then the vast lists of royalty attempt
With trembling foot. Ah! were I only skill'd
In reigning, as I am in loving thee!

*Hen.* But, save thy husband, each man in the court
Appears a just sagacious counsellor:
And he's the only one in whom designs
Of private benefit may not abide . . .

*Ma.* Or at least, ought not.—But, refrain awhile:
Thou in my heart hast fix'd suspicion's wound;
And do thou heal it. Not that I retain,
I swear to thee, the recollection of it,
Much less its rancor: ah! believe my words.
But separation does not strengthen love,
Nor mitigate suspicion. By my side
Stand evermore; I shall esteem that day
For ever fortunate on which I shall
Have pow'r to give thee, in exchange for one,
A thousand proofs of love. Malignant spies,
I know, there are not wanting, who delight
Betwixt us to maintain disgraceful discord;
And seek p'rhaps to foment it. But, if thou
Wilt evermore be near me, in whom else,
Better than in thyself, can I confide?

*Hen.* I hear seducing words, but I endure
Deeds of increasing harshness.

*Ma.* But, what wouldst thou?
Speak; and I will do all . . .

*Hen.* I would, in fact,
Be father, consort, king; or of these names
I will divest myself . . .

*Ma.* Thou wouldst have all,
Except my heart. And more than thy demand,
Refusal wounds my soul; ah! would to Heaven

That thou at least with this wert satisfied!
Yes, far as in me lies, thou shalt have all;
I only ask of thee, that thou preserve
Some decency tow'rds me before the world;
And that henceforward thou repeat no more
Thy ancient exhibition of contempt.
Ah! if thou love me not, let others think,
At least, that thou esteemest me. To this
I do conjure thee by the common pledge,
Not of thy love, but mine. Thou shalt again
Behold our only, our belovèd son;
To thy paternal arms shall he be brought:
That thou'rt a king, a consort, and a father,
May he remind thee.

*Hen.* I am well aware
What is my duty: if I have appear'd
Unequal to its weight, the fault was theirs,
Who have from me transferr'd it to themselves.
To-day am I resolved, e'en more than others,
To recompense affection with affection;
But, artifice with scorn.—This single day
Will be sufficient to bring all to light.
I in the faces of thy friends shall see
The court's implicit rule, thy secret thoughts.

## SCENE IV.

MARY, BOTHWELL.

*Both.* May I approach, as the exulting witness
Of thy recover'd joy? Thy husband, say,
Of what complexion are his present thoughts?
Is he reform'd?...

*Ma.* Inflexibly the same.
What do I say? He to his former rage
Unites a smile of bitter irony:
He turns to ridicule my earnest words.
Unhappy I! What means have I now left
To soften his asperity? I speak
Of love; he speaks of pow'r: I am the injured,
Yet he complains; and by ambitious thoughts,

But destitute of all sublimity,
His bosom is attainted and depraved.
*Both.* What does he ask for?
*Ma.* Pow'r unlimited.
*Both.* Hast thou that, to confer?
*Ma.* He now would deem
That pow'r a bauble which I gave to him,
Ere he compell'd me to resume the gift.
He has entirely yielded to oblivion
The perils whence I rescued him.
*Both.* Yet thou
Canst not, without incurring blame, refuse
To share that pow'r of which thyself art mistress
With him who is thy husband. That which he
Possess'd before, that which the laws give to him,
E'en at thy risk thou must restore him all.
*Ma.* I still should have, if I could love him less,
E'en more than one resource; to suffer him,
Left to himself, headlong to rush at once
In numberless inextricable snares:
For the result can ne'er be prosperous
Of his ill-plann'd and worse-transacted schemes.
But I exist, assail'd on ev'ry side
By an o'erwhelming tempest. His misfortunes,
In one respect, affect me more than him; . . .
But yet, if he alone prefers his ruin . . .
Still will that ruin be a heavy blow
To me, come when it may. And then my son! . . .
O Heav'ns! if tow'rds my son my thoughts I turn,
On whom, perchance, the errors of his father
May one day fall! . . . I am no longer able . . .
*Both.* Queen, thou desir'st me not to flatter thee:
And I impose it on myself to serve thee.
A mother's and a consort's love alone
Combat within thy breast. Except thy son,
Thou shouldst give all to Henry.
*Ma.* And that son
Precisely, more than all the rest, he asks.
*Both.* But is he thine to give? Say, is he not
Rather our public pledge? Where were the wonder
If he, a guilty spouse, proved a worse father?

*Ma.* But yet, to quiet his perturbèd spirit,
I promised him . . .
*Both.* Thy son? He govern him?
Take heed.
*Ma.* He govern him? Myself I dare not
Attempt it: and to others shall I yield him?
*Both.* 'Twere well for thee to be upon thy guard,
Lest others take him from thee.
*Ma.* —Whither tend
These thy insinuations? P'rhaps thou knowest? . . .
*Both.* I? . . . Nothing . . . But, I think that p'rhaps by chance
Henry to-day return'd not. Hitherto
I've been the first to cut off all the means
Whence the vain threats of Henry (whether feign'd
Or real) e'er could be reported to thee
By the informers who in courts abound.
But, to more culpable contrivances
Should he direct his thoughts, whate'er the risk,
'Twould be my duty to reveal to thee,
Not what he says, but what he aims to do.
*Ma.* He hath been hitherto assuredly
To my repeated invitations deaf . . .
And now, who knows? . . . But, speak: perchance to-day
Some indirect and circumventing purpose
May bring him back to court?
*Both.* I do not think it;
But I should be a witless counsellor,
If I from time to time suggested not
Precautionary thoughts of what might happen.
He never was assail'd for this his son
With overweening fondness: wherefore then
Demand him now? And Ormond, too, pretends
Anxious desire to see the royal youth:
And he brings with him all the stratagems
Of her who England rules: all may be fear'd;
Yet nothing there may be; but on the throne
Blind trust is an unpardonable fault.
*Ma.* Must I for ever from one agony
Be driven to another? Wretched fate! . . .
Yet, what can I now do?

*Both.* Watch, while I watch;
Thou canst do nought beside. If it be false,
My fear can do no harm; if true, some good.
Under what pretext seems most plausible,
Only contrive that Henry now should have
Apartments separate from these, in which
The royal youth resides; the latter leave
Guarded by thy most faithful partisans
Unintermittingly. Do thou henceforward
Go from this place, and occupy with Henry,
As a more cheerful or more healthy dwelling,
The ancient castle which commands the city;
There mayst thou quickly see what influence
Thy love has o'er him. Thus thou clear'st his path,
If thoughts of reformation sway his will;
And thus, if evil purposes possess him,
Preventest him from injuring himself.

*Ma.* Wise is thy counsel; I adhere to it.
Do thou meanwhile, for my security,
Glory, and peace, efficient means invent,
And gentle ones, whence I may frustrate ills
Past remedy, if time should give them strength.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE I.

HENRY.

*Hen.* No useless is delay; nor should I now
Temporise longer. Spite of my desire,
A treach'rous pageantry of honor waits me:
Why is this unaccustom'd dwelling-place
To me assign'd? . . . 'Tis true, beneath one roof
Innocence and imposture ill unite;
The hateful palace is no home for me:
The insult is too manifest; too plain
Is the mistrust. Let me decide at last,
At last adopt some measures.—Ormond seeks
To speak to me; let him be heard. Perchance

He may suggest, when I the least expect it,
Some remedy, some project of deliv'rance.

## SCENE II.

HENRY, ORMOND.

*Hen.* To this new court, which has no parallel,
Thou'rt welcome, Ormond.
*Or.* Thy vicissitudes
To us are too well known; Elizabeth
Sends me not hither as a mere spectator:
But, her heart full of grief for thee, she wills
That I should be 'twixt you the instrument
Of perfect peace.
*Hen.* Peace? Where there is not found
A true equality, peace? Oftentimes
Have I been flatter'd with so fond a hope,
But still have been deceived.
*Or.* But yet, methinks,
This day to peace is sacred . . .
*Hen.* Thou'rt deceived.
To pass all bounds of sufferance with me
This is the day selected: and at once
This is the day on which I have resolved
No more to suffer.
*Or.* What? dost thou believe
That the queen's heart is not sincere towards thee?
*Hen.* Her heart? Who sees it? But, not even words
Hear I from her, in which I may confide.
*Or.* If she deceive thee, thy disdain is just.
Although I come the messenger of peace,
Yet I presume (instructed thus to act,
If it were needful, by Elizabeth)
To offer thee, whiche'er best suit thy wishes:
Advice, assistance, or an escort safe.
*Hen.* If in my heart ignoble passions dwelt,
I could, without assistance, means devise,
And certain means of vengeance: but alas!
There is nor guide, nor guardian friend, who now
Were competent to clear for me the path
For the attainment of the peace I wish.

O, bitter is the state in which I live!
If I tow'rds violence should turn my thoughts,
If then indeed not criminal, forthwith
I seem at least ungrateful: yet, again,
If I in part relent, the insolence,
And the presumption, of those courtly slaves,
Who are the origin of ev'ry ill,
Beyond all bounds I foster. Thence I fix,
Amid the many schemes I might pursue,
On nothing long: and to them all prefer
To go from hence in voluntary exile.

*Or.* What wouldst thou do, O king? This remedy
Seems worse than the disease, if I may say so.

*Hen.* So seems it not to me: and I expect
That hence more injury would fall on others,
Than shame upon myself.

*Or.* But, know'st thou not,
That an expatriated king excites
Rather contempt than pity? And should he
Even excite compassion, would he thence
Be ever satisfied?

*Hen.* When pow'r is gone,
What profits arrogance? I now am here,
Of all men least, a monarch not obey'd.

*Or.* But thou, by changing climes, wouldst thou obtain
The privileges private men enjoy?
Or of a monarch's name divest thyself?
Ah! since thou givest me with thy discourse
Boldness to speak, let me convince thee of it.—
Whither direct thy steps? to France? reflect
That there to Mary is the royal race
Allied by blood and friendship; that all there
Applaud her character, where she at first
Imbibed their soft insinuating customs.
There thou wilt find a messenger from Rome,
Primed with indulgences and poisons, ready
Straight to invade, if thou but give occasion,
This miserable realm. Thus to thy foes
Thou wilt thyself surrender: instantly
They will contrive to prove thee criminal . . .

*Hen.* And do I live surrounded here by friends?

*Or.* Thou livest in thy kingdom.—I should add
To thee, in vain, how a perfidious Spain,
Or an unwarlike Italy, asylum,
The one precarious, and the other base,
Would offer to thy person: I proceed;
(And thence thou mayst infer if I speak truth)
I, in the first place, counsel thee to fly
Unto Elizabeth.
*Hen.* And shall a land
Be my asylum, where I was imprison'd?
I never entertain'd so wild a thought:
There is my mother forcibly confined . . .
*Or.* Dost thou not see it clearly? Much less free,
And less secure, here would thy mother be
Than she is there. I controvert it not;
Elizabeth was adverse to thee once:
But royal counsels change with change of times.
Scarce did she see from you an heir arise,
Of her no less than of his mother's realm,
Than she, entirely pacified, tow'rds him,
As tow'rds her offspring, turn'd her ev'ry thought;
And more reluctant from this time became
To yield herself to the connubial yoke.
Afterwards hearing that thou hadst incurr'd
The disesteem of Mary; and that those
Who had thrown off the servitude of Rome
Pined in oppression; that the royal child,
E'en with his milk, perniciously imbibed
Errors of superstition, much she grieved.
Hence she commanded me, if tow'rds thyself
Mary changed not her conduct, to direct
To thee alone the orders I received;
And means I offer thee, (not means of blood,
For, like thyself, I hold those means accursed)
By which thou wilt infallibly regain
All of thy former splendor.—In one word,
By which thou mayst obtain thy liberty;
My sov'reign please; to thy belovèd son
Secure a loftier, and a safer station;
Snatch Mary from deceit; annihilate
Thy guilty foes: all this, if so thou wilt,
Quickly thou mayst perform.

*Hen.* What dost thou mean?
*Or.* That which is possible to do: which thou
Alone canst do, others not e'en attempt.—
The royal heir, thy son, will be the means
Of thy advancement, and at once of peace . . .
*Hen.* How? . . .
*Or.* In these thresholds maxims are instill'd
That will confirm his servitude to Rome;
He, who is destined one day to possess
The twofold sceptres of Britannia's isles.
Elizabeth, and with her, all her realm;
See this with evil eye: for recent yet
Are in my country the inflicted wounds,
With which another Mary tortured her,
When instigated by the Spanish Philip.
Eternal and immitigable hate,
And such devotion of heroic rage,
Hath Spain to us bequeath'd, that each of us
Had rather perish, than again obey
The ritual of blood, abhorr'd and cruel.
Thy son will be compell'd to disavow
The Roman worship, should the day arrive,
When he is call'd to fill the British throne:
Were it not better for us all that he
Never imbibed an error he must leave?
*Hen.* Who this denies? And thou p'rhaps thinkest me
More in my heart attach'd to Rome than others?
But how can I, according to my judgment,
Bring up my son, whose very intercourse
To me is interdicted? . . .
*Or.* But wouldst thou
Be master of his person, by that step
Thou wouldst gain all.
*Hen.* Hence is he taken from me.
*Or.* And hence shouldst thou recover him.
*Hen.* But guards
Watch always.
*Or.* These may be deceived, be bribed . . .
*Hen.* And grant that I obtain him; afterwards
How shall I keep him . . .
*Or.* I will keep him for thee.
Beneath Elizabeth's protecting eye

He shall grow up: and she will be to him
More than a mother. Fed with lofty thoughts,
There shall he learn to reign; let me avail
Only to rescue him from hence, and thou
Shalt quickly see thyself the master here.
Elizabeth shall make thee be proclaim'd,
During his adolescence, for thy son,
The sov'reign-regent of this realm; henceforth
Thou mayst assign thy spouse what part seems best
To thee to give; precisely that, in short,
Which she appears to thee to merit.

*Hen.* —This
Is a momentous scheme . . .

*Or.* Does it offend thee?

*Hen.* No; but it seems of difficult performance.

*Or.* Be but audacious; all will then be easy.

*Hen.* We have conferr'd too long. Leave me awhile:
I would reflect upon it at my leisure.

*Or.* Ere long, then, I return to thee: the time
Is urgent . . .

*Hen.* When the night is far advanced,
Return to me, as much as possible,
Observed by none.

*Or.* I will at thy commands
Come here. Meanwhile, O Henry, recollect,
That blows, when least expected, always fall
The most severe; that purposes of state
Require it; and that thou wilt hence derive
Both honor and advantage to thyself.

## Scene III.

HENRY.

*Hen.* I hence win honor, if I win advantage.—
This is a mighty scheme, and mighty ills
May hence originate . . . But yet, what ills?
Though it bestead me not, so circumstanced
Am I, that nothing now can injure me . . .
Who comes? What can this man now seek from me?

## Scene IV.

HENRY, BOTHWELL.

*Hen.* What wantest thou with me? Bring'st thou perchance
The wonted homage to thy pageant king?
*Both.* Although thou treatest me with such disdain,
I, not the less, am still thy faithful subject.
To thee the queen dispatch'd me: she has learn'd
That thou, as of an insult, bitterly
Complain'st of the abode assign'd to thee.
Know, that she means, ere long, herself to come there
With thee to dwell; and further I am bid
To say to thee . . .
*Hen.* More than the diff'rent dwelling,
Far more, it mortifies me to observe
That ev'ry word I utter is repeated:
Yet this injustice is not new to me.
Now go; and tell her, that, if I ought not
To deem myself thence injured, such excuse,
Although not more believed, at least had been
More welcome from her lips; and not by means
Of an ambassador . . .
*Both.* If thou wouldst lend
To her a somewhat more benignant ear,
My lord, far other sentiments than these
Thou wouldst hear from her lips: nor should I be
The messenger selected: but, she fears
Lest that her words to thee . . .
*Hen.* She fears lest she
Should wound me with her words; and seeks, at once,
To do it with her deeds.
*Both.* Thou art deceived.
I know how much she loves thee; and in proof,
I, though unwelcome to thee, though by thee
Suspected wrongfully, address'd myself
To bring to thee a message so important,
That to another than myself the queen
Would not confide it: it is such that thou
Art bound to hear it; neither from her lips

Would Mary venture to express it to thee:
A message, which 'tis difficult to speak,
But yet, which, if convey'd as she suggested,
As the expostulation of a friend,
Clearly denotes no lukewarm tenderness.
*Hen.* Com'st thou as arbiter of hidden secrets?—
Thou, who art thou?
*Both.* ... Since thou wouldst fain forget
The action of Dunbar, whence, having first
The rebels slain, I reconducted you
Both here in safety to your throne; I am
One who, because it is imposed on him,
Now speaks to thee.
*Hen.* But it is not imposed
On me to hear thee.
*Both.* Yet thou hearest others.
*Hen.* What say'st thou? Others?... What audacity!...
*Both.* Thou in these thresholds art betray'd; but not
By those whom thou mistrustest. Thou thyself,
E'en more than all of us, shouldst doubt a man,
To whom the function of ambassador,
Impulse and opportunity affords
To perfidy unpunish'd. To ourselves
Ormond comes not the messenger of peace;
And yet thou hearest him at length; ...
*Hen.* Ye traitors!
Is this to me imputed as a crime?
Ye are as vile as ye perfidious are;
Ye twist to evil ev'ry deed of mine.
Ormond obtain'd the audience he desired:
I sought him not: ambassador to me
He came not here ...
*Both.* Assuredly he came
Contriving machinations 'gainst thyself:
Were he no more than traitor! But already
E'en more defective in dexterity
Than in discretion, he has proved himself:
Far too precipitately he divulged
His hidden hopes, his culpable designs:
With want of caution he betray'd himself
So prematurely, that before he spoke

With thee, the queen already knew the whole.
Nor thence, for him, whom he would fain delude,
Has the queen's bosom so much wrath conceived,
As gen'rous pity. In her name, O king,
I do adjure thee to renounce thy error;
Nor, with thy own dishonor, do thou bring
Advantage to the traitor, detriment
To her who loves thee.
*Hen.* —More explicitly
Speak thou, or cease to speak: mysterious words
I do not comprehend; I only know,
That where ye all of you alike are traitors,
I can among you scarcely recognize
Who now betrays me.
*Both.* Easy 'tis to see it:
The one who most would profit by thy ruin.
Elizabeth, your persevering foe,
Your envious, crafty, and ferocious foe,
Dreads peace betwixt you. What canst hope from her?
*Hen.* From her?... I nothing hope: and nothing ask;
And nothing... But what knowest thou? Speak on:
What is alleged against me? What believes,
And what says, Mary?...
*Both.* When a heart is gen'rous,
What need of others to reprove its faults?
What ought I now to say? Except that Ormond
A villain is; that snares are being laid
For thy destruction; and that for thy son,
Thy son so innocent, with many tears,
Mary conjures thee now...
*Hen.* O! wherefore weeps she?...
Thou lay'st those snares for me...
*Both.* My lord, thou art
Thy own deceiver; I do not deceive thee.
The schemes of Ormond were already known:
Already from his indiscreet expressions,
Before he came here to propose it to thee,
That impious stratagem transpired...
*Hen.* To me?...
How dar'st thou, ribald one, thus speak to me?...
If thou proceedest, I will make thee...

*Both.* Thus,
My lord, I have fulfill'd the task imposed.
*Hen.* And I my toleration have exhausted.
*Both.* I spoke, because I was impell'd by duty . . .
*Hen.* Beyond thy duty hast thou spoken. Hence!
*Both.* What to the queen must I report?
*Hen.* Go; tell her, . . .
That thou art rash.
*Both.* My lord . . .
*Hen.* What! not yet gone?

## Scene V.

HENRY.

*Hen.* All, all are base; and I am like the rest.—
O dark abyss of infamy and fraud!
Ah fool! Could I, in an ambassador
From Britain sent, place any confidence? . . .

## Scene VI.

HENRY, ORMOND.

*Hen.* Return'st thou here so soon?
*Or.* One doubt alone
Remains unsatisfied: hence I return . . .
*Hen.* Thou witless traitor! dar'st thou in my sight
Appear again?
*Or.* Alas! what has befallen? . . .
*Hen.* Say, didst thou hope that I should not discover
From whence thy fraudulent proposals sprung?
And dost thou fancy that they will remain
Unpunish'd?
*Or.* Whence so unexpectedly
Art thou thus changed? . . . Erewhile thou spakest me . . .
*Hen.* Erewhile I wish'd to see to what a length
Thy hostile and insidious stratagems,
Beneath a mask of peace, would carry thee.—
But, didst thou ever think that I would deign
To supplicate in your deceitful realm

Assistance for myself, or for my son
A perilous asylum?
*Or.* ... If I was
The maker-up of fraud with thee, think'st thou
That it was now my fault?
*Hen.* It was the fault
Both of thyself, and her who sent thee here,
And of thy hated function ...
*Or.* Rather say,
Of the detested court in which I'm station'd:
The crime was hatch'd in this perfidious soil.
Should I have ever, of my own accord,
Presumed to tamper with thee? In such guilt
Mary involved me; to whose will, in all things,
Elizabeth commanded me to yield.
That which she will'd, I said: and now, of this,
A double treason, she accuses me
To thee?—O no, I shall not be deceived:
May Heav'n permit, henceforth, that I engage
In no transaction with a race like this.
Whatever here may be the consequence,
I feel that I am innocent; such now
Do I proclaim myself; and such elsewhere
I shall proclaim myself with lofty voice.

## Scene VII.

HENRY.

*Hen.* Thou say'st the truth; whose guilt is like to hers?—
Am I the laughing-stock of all? O rage!—
Once more shall this perfidious woman hear me,
Yet once more hear my voice. I am compell'd
To give the last indulgence to my rage
In a few words: but afterwards 'tis time
To try more daring, efficacious measures.

## ACT IV.

### SCENE I.

HENRY, MARY.

*Hen.* Madam, I hate deceit; it serves me not;
And, if it served me, I would not adopt it.
But thou, why dost thou clothe perfidious schemes
With simulated love? I have, I know,
Offended thee; but openly I did it.
Thou shouldst from me have learn'd at least the rules
By which 'tis lawful to offend an equal.
*Ma.* What words are these? What hast thou met with, say?
Before firm peace betwixt us is renew'd,
I hear already . . .
*Hen.* Peace 'twixt us, thou sayest?
I swear betwixt us everlasting discord:
Avow thy purposes; and copy me:
I would, at last, to thee point out the way,
By which thou mayst pour out thy fathomless,
And pent-up rancor: I would spare to thee
Further deceptions, further flatteries;
And further crimes.
*Ma.* O Heav'ns! and such rebuke
Do I deserve from thee?
*Hen.* Thou sayest well.
Thy guilt at length to such a pitch has risen,
That all rebukes are vain. Disdainful silence
Were more judicious; thou nought else dost merit:—
But yet, this transient utt'rance somewhat soothes me;
And, for the last time, now to make thee hear
This voice, which to thy conscience-stricken heart
Is not supportable.—Means of redress,
Less infamous, and more effectual far
Than thine, are in my reach. In thousand ways
I might, within thy realm, make head against thee:
Nor does thy pow'r divert me from the purpose:
Myself alone commands inaction here:
I would not in our private broils involve

This unoffending people.—But, to-morrow
Thou shalt hear tidings of my destiny:
And may I never more behold thy face.
To thy remorse, (if even that remains)
And to thy faithful counsellors, I leave thee.
*Ma.* Ungrateful, . . . with more fitting epithet
Not to address thee: of my boundless love
Is this the recompense? My suff'rance long?
My unexampled suff'rance? . . . Speak'st thou thus? . . .
Thus clear'st thee of thy fault?—Whence thy contempt?
Dost thou no more remember who I am?
And who thou wert? . . . Ah, pardon, pardon me;
Thou now compell'st me to adopt a language,
To her who speaks it, far more than to him
Who hears it, insupportable. But say,
In what have I offended thee? By thus
Inviting thee, entreating thy return?
By the unguarded warmth of my reception?
By yielding thee too much? By deeming thee
Accessible to thoughts of penitence,
Or wise resolves, or thy hard heart possess'd
E'en of a momentary gratitude?
*Hen.* The throne thou fillest: and the throne was ever
Prolific in conclusive arguments.
But, I am not amazed: whate'er has happen'd
Confirms the fears of my foreboding heart.
Yet, it is fitting that I should assure thee
I never had recourse to artifice;
That I have not, so much as thou mayst deem,
A weak, a headstrong, or an abject spirit;
And that your shameful arts . . .
*Ma.* Act as thou wilt:
I only do beseech thee not to soil
Thy language tow'rds me with injurious phrases;
Thence equally unworthy him who speaks,
And her constrain'd to hear them.
*Hen.* Evermore
In words do I offend thee; thou in deeds
Offendest me. Is the remembrance fled? . . .
*Ma.* Profound remembrance in my heart I keep
Of the remonstrances so often utter'd,

And so much disregarded; faithful, true,
And wise remonstrances; which, what thou art,
Thy manners, and thy disposition, painted,
Ere I bestow'd on thee this hand of mine.
Blinded by love, I would not see, believe . . .
Who then dissembled? . . . Speak, ungrateful one . . .
Alas, alas!—Repentance now is late,
And fruitless . . . O my God! . . . and is it true,
That thou, at any cost, wouldst rather I
Should be thy foe? . . . That, thou canst never make me.
Thou plainly see'st, that thou canst scarcely raise
A transient flame of anger in my breast:
One word of thine, one little word, suffices
To cancel ev'ry provocation past:
If thou wilt hear it, all my love is ready
To speak to me again. Now, O my husband,
Why wilt thou not, whate'er it be, confess
The reason of thy recent discontent?
Quickly will I . . .

*Hen.* Art thou desirous, then,
To hear it from my lips; although it is
Well known to thee, no less than to myself?
Thou shalt be satisfied without delay.
'Tis not thy feign'd affection; not thy feign'd
And flatt'ring words; not the allotted dwelling;
'Tis not the separation from my son;
The promise of supreme authority
Changed into more intolerable wrongs;
I do not, no, of all these things complain:
These with the usual tenor correspond
Of thy deportment tow'rds me; all the fault
Is mine, that I believed thee. But the wrong,
The only wrong that I can ne'er endure,
Is that which thou hast recently contrived.
And what? At last thou call'st Elizabeth,
In the so many indiscreet offences
With which thou ever plottest to my loss,
The false Elizabeth to take a part?

*Ma.* What dost thou now allege against me? Heav'ns!
What proof of this hast thou? . . .

*Hen.* 'Tis true that Ormond

Perfidious is, but not like others here;
In vain thou sentest him to flatter me,
To tempt, to promise, to seduce. Did mortal
E'er hear of such a plot? Yes, forcibly
To wish to goad me into treachery?
Whence pretexts thou might'st afterwards derive
For thy conceal'd iniquity . . .
*Ma.* What hear I?
May Heav'n to ashes instantly reduce me,
If I e'er . . .
*Hen.* Perjury avails not here.
At once I recognized the artifice,
And, the deceiver to deceive, I feign'd
To yield to his entreaties: but I loathe,
And I am wearied of, such abject arts:
Ormond already has received from me
A final answer. Now Elizabeth
Will scorn thee, who detested thee before;
And she will be the first to blame, and raise
A bitter outcry 'gainst those very crimes,
To which herself impell'd thee.
*Ma.* This is all
A vile imposture. Who thus dares to soil
My name with guilt? . . .
*Hen.* Thy followers possess
Souls thoroughly imbued with perfidy;
Do not afflict thyself: they have but shown
Themselves not fully skill'd in choice of time.
Bothwell and Ormond, nobly emulous
To fathom the recesses of my heart,
Have both their own, and thine, too much exposed.
*Ma.* —If reason could have influence o'er thy soul,
Or wert thou in a state to hear it now,
It would be easy to explain the whole:
To call them both together; and to hear . . .
*Hen.* I be confronted with such men as these? . . .
*Ma.* And how by any other means can I
Convince thee of the truth? How from thine eyes
Remove the bandage?
*Hen.* 'Tis removed already:
I see too clearly . . . —Yet, wouldst thou at once

Convince me, and my apprehensions quell?
To thee but one infallible resource
Remains for this. From thee do I require
The execrable head of haughty Bothwell;
And Ormond's instant banishment.—With this,
Say, art thou ready to comply?
*Ma.* At length
I see, (alas, too evidently see!)
To what thy wishes tend. Whoe'er he be
That may communicate to me the truth,
Is for that cause alone obnoxious to thee:
He, be he who he may, in whom I trust,
Becomes thy foe. Be quick, renew at once
The massacre of Rizzio: thou art used
With thy own hands to execute thy vile
And unjust vengeances. Thou mayst destroy,
In the same generous, heroic guise,
The life of Bothwell; to restrain thy crimes
I have no pow'r: reason forbids that I
Should imitate thee in these bloody rites.
Let Bothwell be condemn'd, if he is guilty;
But let him first be heard. While I disdain not
To subject e'en myself to the tribunal
Of solemn, and irrefragable justice,
Shall I dare subject to despotic power
Even the very vilest of my people?
*Hen.* Here guilty men can always challenge favor,
While, from the worthy, justice stands aloof:
See what it is to reign.—I take my leave;
Farewell.
*Ma.* Ah! hear me . . .
*Hen.* I intend to pass
In the allotted fortress this last night,
Which I devote to anguish, not to sleep.
The invitation I accept; a dwelling,
Which I am not constrain'd to share with thee,
Is welcome to me, till to-morrow's dawn
Beholds me far from thy abhorrèd city.
I thought indeed e'en yet to cause in thee
Some perturbation; but I vainly thought it.—
Thy face is tranquil as thy heart is false.

## Scene II.

MARY.

*Ma.* —Unhappy I! . . . Where am I? . . . What, alas!
Can I now do? . . . What fury goads him on? . . .
Whence can these infamous suspicions rise? . . .
In what does he confide? In my scorn'd love? . . .
But, if he should attempt? . . . Here he must stay . . .
If he departs from hence, he will excite
Hatred for me in ev'ry one he meets,
Rather than pity for himself: Heav'n knows
That I no otherwise am culpable,
Than that too much I loved him, and too little
Discern'd him as he is. What will now say
The impious sects, accustom'd so long time
To rail with bitter calumnies against me?
These ev'ry day increase in strength and number . . .
Perchance on these unworthy Henry leans . . .
Doubts, errors, dangers, fears, on ev'ry side
I see, alas! arising. To resolve
Is perilous; to hesitate is worse . . .

## Scene III.

MARY, BOTHWELL.

*Ma.* Bothwell, approach: if thou with thy advice
Canst not now succor my distracted state,
Perchance I stand upon the very brink
Of a tremendous precipice.
*Both.* Alas!
Long hast thou stood there; but now more than ever . . .
*Ma.* And what? With Henry's thoughts art thou acquainted? . . .
*Both.* I know the deeds of Henry. But, O queen,
Hast thou e'er known me to approach thy presence
As the accuser of another man,
Much less, then, of thy consort? Yet to-day
Necessity compels me e'en to this.
*Ma.* Then plots have been contrived? . . .
*Both.* Contrived, say'st thou?
They had e'en now, had Bothwell not been here,

Been executed. Thou art well aware
That I suggested how much it behoved
To watch o'er Henry unremittingly,
And learn the real cause of his return:
But, ere 'twas long, of all his purposes
I gain'd a full discov'ry. Ormond sought
A private audience; tamper'd with his faith;
With flatteries and promises assail'd him:
Then dared he to propose to him, and gain'd,
That he should yield to him thy son . . .
*Ma.* What hear I?
To Ormond? . . .
*Both.* Yes; that he might forthwith place him
Within the court of Queen Elizabeth.
*Ma.* Ah, traitor! . . . Thus despoil me of my son? . . .
And yield him to her hands? . . .
*Both.* A recompense
For this his treach'ry, Henry covenants
That he exclusively should rule this realm.
He thence designs to dictate laws to thee,
To trample more and more beneath his feet
The sacred rites of Rome, and to devote
(See what a father!) everlastingly
His own son to perdition . . .
*Ma.* Heav'ns! No more.
With horror am I stricken . . . And erewhile
Had he so much audacity, that he
Himself to me imputed all the guilt
Of this abominable artifice?
He said that Ormond was impell'd by me
To execute this project; that such snares
Were all of my contrivance: base accuser! . . .
*Both.* He had recourse to subterfuge with thee,
Fearing that thou his treach'ry hadst discover'd.
I erewhile, in thy name, presumed to try
Dissuasive arguments: for such a fault
He would excuse himself, but found no means:
He cannot, nor knows how to contradict it:
Hence he burst forth in such immod'rate rage,
That what at first in me was mere surmise,
Became conviction. I to Ormond ran;
And the weak judgment, the precarious faith,

Irresolution, and inconstancy
Of Henry I display'd to him; and feign'd
That that same Henry had incautiously
To me, in part, the stratagem divulged.
Ormond, although well versed in courtly arts,
Yet thought himself betray'd; and suddenly
Changing his views, denied it not to me;
Yet he maintain'd that Henry was the first
To counsel him to seize the child; that he
Quickly determined to reveal to thee
The whole of this design: and that he feign'd
With him, expressly for this purpose only,
Consent to do it. Then, I also feign'd
To yield to him full credence; and at length
So far prevail'd on him, that he himself
Now comes to thee with a sincere confession
Of ev'ry thing that happen'd: Wilt thou hear him?
He waits thy summons . . .

*Ma.* Let him come, and quickly.

## Scene IV.

MARY.

*Ma.* My son! . . . What have I heard? . . . my son surrender'd
To that most cruel, envious, crafty woman?
And who surrenders him to her? His father;
His very father thus betrays his blood,
His honor, and himself? Was there, alas!
Such guilt e'er found united in one man
With such infatuation?

## Scene V.

MARY, BOTHWELL, ORMOND.

*Ma.* Speak the truth;
What words did Henry use to thee?

*Or.* He . . . yes . . .
He bitterly . . . deplored the disesteem
In which all hold him here.

*Ma.* It is not now
The time to soften down his words: the mask

Take off; confess to me his rash proposals,
And thy rash promises.
*Or.* . . . 'Tis true . . . that he . . .
Sought . . . to obtain of me, . . . in his behalf,
The interference of Elizabeth.
*Ma.* Now by sincerity alone canst thou
Defend thyself. I know the whole affair.
What boots concealment? 'Twere in vain for thee
To seek by silence to elude confession.
Henry himself, as cautious in performing,
As in contriving projects, would betray
Himself, and Ormond, and Elizabeth:
But from thy lips I fain would hear the truth . . .
*Or.* Henry complain'd to me that in these walls
His offspring, destined for a double realm,
Was train'd perniciously: hence he himself
Determined to surrender him in hostage
To Queen Elizabeth, in pledge of faith . . .
*Ma.* O unexampled father! And didst thou
Consent to this?
*Or.* . . . By a direct refusal
I would not quench his hopes too suddenly . . .
I feign'd consent, to learn his further purpose . . .
*Ma.* Let this suffice; no more. Elizabeth,
As plotter of her fraudulent designs,
Hither dispatch'd thee; but, as I conceived,
Of fraudulent designs more subtly plann'd.
Now go thou; that which on thy own account
Thou dost not merit, to thy rank I yield.
Elizabeth meanwhile shall learn from me,
That an ambassador to me is due,
More dexterous at least, if not more faithful.

## Scene VI.

MARY, BOTHWELL.

*Both.* There's art, but mistimed art, in all his words.
'Twixt truth and lies how clumsily he shuffles!
'Tis well that he has been found out in time.
*Ma.* —I find not in me in this hour of need
Or strength to act, or wisdom to explore:

By doubts, by anger, and by fear, at once
I feel my heart as if asunder torn;
And, wouldst thou think it? still that heart retains
I know not what of hope . . .
*Both.* And I too hope,
That now, since the discover'd plot's defeated,
No other evil lurks behind.
*Ma.* O Heav'ns!
Such Henry is, that now that he perceives
His foolish enterprise discover'd . . .
*Both.* He?
What can he do?
*Ma.* He may forsake my realm.
His cruel, last farewell, already he . . .
*Both.* Forsake thy realm?—Before 'twas even known,
This new aggression, thou didst interdict
With justice such a step: more just would be
That interdiction now; now, that perchance,
As an atonement for his ill-plann'd schemes,
Others he would devise in foreign climes
With more successful boldness.
*Ma.* 'Tis most just:
I oft have thought of this; but yet . . .
*Both.* Who knows
Where his malignant steps might carry him?
Who knows what succor he might dare solicit? . . .
He would obtain it; yes, too certainly
In others' rancor he would surely find
A firm alliance.—Thou shouldst now select
The lesser evil . . .
*Ma.* But what is the lesser?
*Both.* Better than I thou know'st it: but to have
Recourse to violence thy kind heart shocks.
Yet, what wouldst thou? Wouldst thou that Henry find
Protection from Elizabeth? If he
In person treat with her, far other plots . . .
*Ma.* O fatal day! and p'rhaps the harbinger
Of others still more fatal! Is it true
That thou at length art come? . . . Disastrous day,
And apprehended long! . . . Unhappy I!
'Gainst him who heretofore has shared my love,

Who shared the fondest wishes of my heart,
Shall I use violence? . . . I cannot do it . . .
And, come what may, it never shall be done.
*Both.* But, think how deeply he may injure thee . . .
*Ma.* What injury can he inflict, that equals
The loss of his affection?
*Both.* Should he once
Make good his flight from hence, assuredly
Thou ne'er wouldst see him more . . .
*Ma.* O Heav'n forbid! . . .
May I not lose him quite . . .
*Both.* And dost not thou,
Much as thy husband, love thy son, O mother?
That son is now in danger terrible;
Death of the soul, the only real death,
Errors corrupting and heretical,
Await, thou know'st, his youthful innocence.
*Ma.* Assuredly I ought . . . but, . . . how, alas? . . .
*Both.* If Henry's liberty were somewhat lessen'd;
Or round his sacred royal person placed
Some slight impediments to its abuse? . . .
*Ma.* He's too impatient of control already:
Remorse, disgrace, and turbulent despair,
Might make him still more headstrong than he is.
And all my faithless and rebellious subjects
Would be his partisans.
*Both.* . . . I now perceive
One means by which thou mayst accomplish this,
And yet excite no tumult; one, no more.—
The night descends; surround with armèd men
Amid its shades, the hill, where singly towers
His royal dwelling. Thither has he now
Withdrawn, to wait there for the dawn of day,
And then depart from thence: he has with him
A few obscure companions. Let him stay there,
Courteously guarded: no one will attempt
Thus to lay hands on him; and thus at once
Thou mak'st his rage abortive. Through this night
No man to him should penetrate: to-morrow
An op'ning leave for thy just arguments;
And let him then impugn them, if he can.

*Ma.* This seems the safest plan; but yet . . .
*Both.* Ah! think,
Thou hast no other.
*Ma.* But, in doing this . . .
*Both.* I will take care of that, if thou desirest . . .
*Ma.* But should, perchance, the orders be exceeded? . . .
Be on thy guard . . .
*Both.* What dost thou apprehend?
That I'm unfitted for the execution?
But, time is short; and, less we miss the' occasion,
I fly . . .
*Ma.* Ah no; . . . stay here . . .
*Both.* For once, at least,
I will use force with thee: O, recollect,
I saved thee once before . . .
*Ma.* I know it; but . . .
*Both.* Confide in me.

### Scene VII.

MARY.

*Ma.* Ah! no . . . Suspend . . . He flies.—
O fatal and irrevocable moment!
Upon a thread my peace and fame now hang.

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## ACT V.

### Scene I.

MARY, MURRAY.

*Mur.* Laying aside all ceremonious forms,
Anxious and breathless, I presume to come,
At an unusual hour, to thy apartments.
O what a night is this! . . .
*Ma.* What wouldst thou now?
*Mur.* What hast thou done? Who thus has counsell'd thee?
In the recesses of thy palace now

Canst thou securely sit, while armèd men
And military cries surround thy consort? . . .
*Ma.* But whence this boldness in thee? . . . All will see
To-morrow that I've robb'd him of no pow'r,
Except the pow'r of injuring himself.
*Mur.* Whate'er the motive, the effect is monstrous,
Most cruel, terrible, and unexampled:
And far more raises fury in the people,
Than strikes them with alarm. Now, well reflect;
There are p'rhaps who deceive thee: p'rhaps I come
In time to re-enlighten thee. To us,
From guilty satellites who inundate
All quarters of the city, in their hands
Bearing lugubrious torches and drawn swords,
Mischief alone can come. What do these troops
Around the rock where stands the royal dwelling,
Ranged in a circle, with ferocious looks
Keeping each man at distance?
*Ma.* For my deeds
Am I accountable to thee? Upright
Are my designs: they shall be known to those
Who ought to know them. Dost thou place thy trust
In the audacious people?
*Mur.* In myself
I trust alone, and in that God of truth
Of whom I am the minister. From me
Life thou mayst take, but not sincerity,
And free and lofty speech . . . Beside thy spouse,
Destroy me if thou wilt; but hear me first.
*Ma.* What words are these? O Heav'ns! . . . and do I wish
My husband's blood? and who with this can charge me? . . .
*Mur.* O spectacle of woe!—The timid stag
Pants in the bloody and ferocious claws
Of the infuriate tigress . . . Ah! already
She tears him piecemeal . . . Tremulous he falls,
He dies; . . . and was . . . Ah! who forbears from weeping?—
O flash of lightning! What eternal ray
Bursts on my dazzled sight? Am I a mortal?—
The dense and dreadful clouds, that, in their womb
Of pitchy blackness, hold the future buried,

Behold, in volumes of sulphureous smoke
They roll away, and rapidly they vanish . . .
What do I see? I see, ah yes, that traitor
Reeking with blood-drops yet. Perfidious traitor!
Reeking with sacred and tremendous blood,
Thou liest in the widow'd bed yet warm?
Ah, impious woman! canst thou suffer this? . . .
*Ma.* What voice is that? What accents do I hear?
O Heav'ns! what saidst thou? . . . Presages of terror . . .
He hears me not; an unaccustom'd flame
Burns in his rolling eye-balls . . .
*Mur.* Even now,
Thou second Ahab's daughter! do I hear
The horrid howlings; I already see
The bloody jaws of the infuriate dogs,
By whom thy impure entrails shall be torn.—
But thou, who sitt'st upon the throne usurp'd,
Son of iniquity, liv'st thou and reignest?
*Ma.* His bosom labors with a threat'ning God!
O Heav'ns! . . . Ah! hear me . . .
*Mur.* No, thou livest not:
Behold the scythe appointed to mow down
The impious harvest. Death, . . . I hear thy shriek,
And thy invisible approach I feel.
O vengeance of my God! of ev'ry crime
How dost thou take account! . . . Heav'n triumphs: see,
See the perfidious woman is now torn
E'en from the arms of her adult'rous husband . . .
Behold the traitors are betray'd . . . O joy!
They are dissever'd, . . . lacerated, . . . slain.
*Ma.* Thou mak'st me tremble . . . Ah! . . . of whom
speak'st thou? . . .
I faint . . .
*Mur.* But what new sight? . . . O gloomy scene!
Around a dismal scaffold do I see
Sable and sanguinary ornaments? . . .
And who is this preparing to ascend it?
O! art thou she? Dost thou, so proud and dainty,
Bend to the cleaving axe thy lofty neck?
Another sceptred dame inflicts on thee
The mighty blow. The faithless blood spouts forth;

And lo! a thirsty spectre drinks it all
To the last drop.—Ah! would celestial wrath
Be satisfied with this! But, comet-like,
Thou drawest after thee a fatal track.
A race of wretched, proud, and abject kings
Spring from the womb of the expiring woman.
The just and horribly avenging ire
Of the great King of kings doth run transfused
E'en with their life-blood . . .
*Ma.* . . . . Wretched that I am! . . .
What light, O minister of Heav'n, illumes thee?
Ah! cease . . . ah! cease . . . I die . . .
*Mur.* Who calls me now? . . .
In vain from my affrighted eyes wouldst thou
Chase this tremendous sight . . . I see already
In the thick darkness all the spectres throng.—
O! who art thou, that almost mak'st me shed
Tears of compassion? . . . Ah! above thy head
The axe is lifted: now, alas! it falls . . .
I see thy sever'd and once-crownèd head
Roll in the dust! . . . And art thou unavenged? . . .
Alas! thou art: for thy distinguish'd head
Long had been due to a more ancient vengeance.—
How many lesser royal shades I see
Fight, . . . fear, . . . retreat, . . . discomfited, . . . in turns!
O lineage, fatal as thou art to others,
Destructive to thyself! For thee the streams
Are dyed in blood . . . And dost thou merit it? . . .
Ah, fly thou, to contaminate no more
This region with thy footsteps: go; and seek,
E'en in the breast of ignominy seek,
Connatural refuge; with idolaters,
Thy fit companions, herd: there drag along,
The throne's disgrace, the laughing-stock of men,
Scorn'd e'en in wretchedness, opprobrious days . . .
*Ma.* What do I hear? . . . Alas! . . . what unknown power
Have thy prophetic accents o'er my heart! . . .
*Mur.* —O lofty transports of my troubled mind,
Of rapt imagination, of my full,
My burden'd yet illuminated spirit!
Whither have ye impell'd me? . . . What said I? . . .

Where have ye led me? . . . What have I beheld? . . .
To whom have spoken? . . . Am I in the palace?
The palace? . . . O abode of grief and death,
I fly from thee for ever . . .
*Ma.* Stop . . .
*Mur.* O lady,
Say: hast thou changed thy purpose?
*Ma.* Hapless I . . .
I scarcely . . . seem to . . . breathe . . . Must I then give
Means to my foes to injure me? . . .
*Mur.* No, thou
Shouldst take the means of injuring from others;
But first discover who it is that injures.
For thy excuse I'm willing to believe
That Bothwell is not fully known to thee:
Such of that miscreant are the' enormities,
That they were e'en sufficient to appal
The world's most harden'd profligates.
*Ma.* O Heav'ns!
Should he betray me! . . . Yet 'twere best to doubt.—
Go now to Henry instantly thyself:
And, in my name, let Argyll be thy guide.
Provided that he promises on oath
Not to depart from Scotland, till between us
Our mutual variances are clear'd, I swear,
Ere morn, of all my troops to rid the plain.
Go, fly; obtain but this, and then return.

## Scene II.

MARY.

*Ma.* . . . What fear oppresses me! Alas! . . . if ever? . . .
But, am I guilty? Thou, Who knowest all things,
Knowest that I am not.—Yet in my heart
I never had more horrible forebodings . . .
What can they mean? And from this Murray's lips,
What fulminating imprecations roll'd!—
A night so pregnant with dismay as this
I never knew till now . . .

## Scene III.

MARY, BOTHWELL.

*Ma.* What hast thou done?
Where hast thou dragg'd me? Still remains there time
For reparation: bid thy men disperse . . .
*Both.* What? hast thou once more changed thy sentiments?
*Ma.* I never bade thee . . . thou first daredst . . .
*Both.* Yes,
I dared propose to thee a gentler means,
For the obtaining of thy end, than any
That thou contrivedst: and thou gav'st to me
The care of this, which I accepted. Now
Henry has seen my squadrons; he has heard
The name of Bothwell; to and fro he runs
Along the gall'ries, and for desp'rate fight
Prepares himself. Distinctly I beheld him,
By lurid torches lighted, come and go,
Furiously chafe, and make parade of valor;
The thunder of his menaces descends
E'en to the plain. 'Twere easy to recall
The troops; but who could afterwards appease
The rage of Henry? Of myself I speak not:
I were a trifling victim (if indeed
I could suffice) in such a cause as this:
But what would be thy fate? The angry Henry . . .
*Ma.* Ah speak: did Murray not this instant go
From hence to Henry? . . .
*Both.* I beheld him not.—
Say, has that minister of lies again
Conferr'd with thee?
*Ma.* Ah yes, too certainly! . . .
Though of a hostile sect the minister,
What has he not reveal'd to me? O Heav'ns!
Fatal prognostics from his lips I heard.
Myself dispatch'd him as a messenger
To my unyielding husband: may his words
Avail, as they have penetrated mine,
To penetrate his heart! Who knows? such means

Oft has the unseen will of Heav'n elected:
P'rhaps Murray is His instrument. Go, run;
See that the king speaks with him.
*Both.* Murray, foe
Of our religion, at his will aspires
To sway the feeble mind of Henry; hence
He feigns to be his friend. Arch-hypocrite!
His only passion is to head a party.
The most determined of the rebels stand
Already arm'd; they want a man to raise
The standard of revolt; and he will raise it.
What are their schemes, thou knowest; thou who, once
Fall'n in their hands, heard'st them dictate to thee
Their haughty and injurious laws: and I,
Who freed thee from them, too well recollect.—
Now, while I breathe, I swear that thou shalt not
Stoop to these men: to disobey thee now
Is loyalty. All method of approach
To ev'ry man is absolutely closed:
And he who would attempt it, forfeits life.
In vain the most devoted of thy friends
Would there present himself; e'en in thy name
In vain would Murray go there . . .
*Ma.* What? hast thou
Ventured so far? . . .
*Both.* I dare, and I will, save thee:
I'm perfectly aware of what I do.
If thou dost not now openly convict
Henry of guilt, since thou hast offer'd him
An open insult, thou thyself art ruin'd.
*Ma.* Come what may come: I had far rather die,
Than bring a blot upon my fame . . . Obey, then;
Thy overweening zeal will injure me:
Then quickly go, and bid the bands disperse . . .
But what do I behold? . . . What horrid blaze! . . .
Ah! . . . what a crash! The earth doth quake and open . . .
*Both.* O! . . . from the bursting clouds devouring flames
Descend from Heav'n? . . .
*Ma.* . . . The op'ning doors fly back! . . .
*Both.* O! what a roaring in the fiery air! . . .
*Ma.* . . . Ah! whither shall I fly? . . .

## SCENE IV.

MURRAY, MARY, BOTHWELL.

*Mur.* Where canst thou fly?
*Ma.* Murray! . . . what means it? . . . Thou . . . return'st already? . . .
*Mur.* And art thou here? Go; see thy murder'd husband . . .
*Ma.* Alas! . . . what do I hear? . . .
*Both.* The king slain? how? By whom? . . .
*Mur.* By thee, thou villain.
*Both.* What dar'st say? . . .
*Ma.* O Heav'ns! . . . is Henry slain? . . . But how? . . . I heard
The terrible report! . . .
*Mur.* But thou art safe.
The house where Henry slept has been blown up,
Even from its foundations: he has found
A dreadful tomb amid its ghastly ruins.
*Ma.* What is it that I hear! . . .
*Both.* Assuredly,
Henry himself, to the collected powder
Stored mid-way up the hill, in desp'rate fit
Set fire.
*Mur.* Thee, Bothwell, ev'ry one proclaims
Thee, traitor.
*Ma.* Wicked one! hast thou then dared? . . .
*Both.* Behold my head: 'tis forfeited at once
To him who proves me guilty of this deed.
I ask no favor at thy hand, O queen:
But strict, entire, and expeditious justice.
*Mur.* Himself he slew not. Wicked people slew him . . .
*Ma.* O horrible suspicion! Pang far worse
Than that of any death! . . . Eternal blot! . . .
O cruel grief! . . . —Now quickly from my eyes
Let each withdraw. The truth shall be discover'd;
And let him tremble, whosoe'er he be,
The wicked author of a deed like this.
For vengeance now, and nothing else, I live.

*Both.* O queen, thy sorrow I indeed respect;
But for myself I tremble not.
*Mur.* Alas!
Hast thou a cause to tremble?—On this spot,
Till Heav'n's avenging thunderbolt is hurl'd,
The guiltless only have just cause of fear.

END OF VOL. I.

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